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THE
DENIAL;
OR, THE
HAPPY RETREAT.
A NOVEL.
VOL. I.



THE
DENIAL;
OR, THE
HAPPY RETREAT.
A NOVEL.

By the Rev. JAMES THOMSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

*Hoc patrium est, potius consuefacere filium
Sulâ sponte rectè facere, quàm alieno metu.
Hoc pater ac dominus interest : hoc qui nequit,
Fateatur se nescire imperare liberis.*

TERENT. in ADELPH.

'Tis this then is the duty of a father ;
To make a son embrace a life of virtue
Rather from choice than terror or constraint.
Here lies the the mighty difference between
A father and a master. He who knows not
How to do this, let him confess he knows not
How to rule children.

COLMAN.

L O N D O N :

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P R E F A C E.

THE chief intention of publication is instruction and entertainment. Where the latter is the principal motive of any production, it is certainly defective, as it encourages a waste of time, without the probability of reaping any essential benefit : Where the former is the only aim, although commendable and praiseworthy, the work will be deemed by many dull, tedious, and insufferable. But where the instructive is combined with the entertaining, where the fine sensibilities of the human heart are made subservient to the purposes of morality, the work is perused with

VOL. I. B plea-

P R E F A C E.

pleasure by the rational, and applauded by the judicious.

The dissemination of virtue ought to be the only stimulant for any publication; from the perusal of which the propensities of the youthful may be ameliorated, and the laudable inclinations of the aged established. Where this is not the case, a tendency to vice is encouraged, and the habits of evil confirmed. To discourage this vicious tendency, to discountenance this proneness to evil, every friend to Society should exert those talents with which he is endowed, either privately or publicly, for the confirmation of that virtue, which is too often exposed to the attacks of hardy immorality, and the formidable shafts of insinuating ridicule.

Some, in the great concerns of life, are capable of judging for themselves ;
many

P R E F A C E.

many are wholly dependant on the judgement of others. Hence immorality, like an impetuous inundation, overwhelms the giddy and inconsiderate, the thoughtless and the vain, in the dreary whirlpool of inevitable perdition. Hence the prevalence of ridicule, in combating the principles of religion and virtue; in laughing at, and finally eradicating the seeds of morality which, from negligence and inattention, have scarcely taken root in the youthful mind.

That the present is an age of levity, will scarcely be denied by any person of observation; that it is more criminal than the age of our predecessors, I will not take upon me to determine. To condemn is easy; to demonstrate difficult. That the majority of a nation may give into many of the levi-

B 2

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P R E F A C E.

ties and frivolities of the age, without absolutely incurring the positive stain of culpability, is perhaps probable; that many of the present generation may adopt, from example and precept, propensities injurious to the good of society, and pernicious to their own morals, without finally departing from the mild influence of virtue, is possible; but it is evident and demonstrative, that many, from the contagion of these pursuits, will be entangled to their ruin, without a possibility of escape. That train of consideration, that examination of cause and effect, that power to deliberate with caution and choose with diffidence, is the lot of a very few. Hence engagements originate, connexions are formed, and friendships cemented, in the moment of hilarity and mirth, whose appearance is innocent, whose issue is not
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P R E F A C E.

suspected. Soon a vicissitude is observed, but not the least glimpse of criminality appears. Suspicion is lulled to sleep. One venial trespass is committed, and immediately succeeded by the bitter pang of repentance; example encourages, and precept approves. A fresh commission renders the heart more callous, and soon it becomes obdurate. Repentance is forgotten, for remorse has lost its sting. Thus a virtuous disposition, by being entangled in the snares of vicious companions, becomes in time an adept in the practice of irreligion and immorality, and commits with pleasure, what it would have lately shuddered at with horror and detestation. Caution is requisite, for example is contagious.

Every publication has a certain tendency either to disseminate and excite to virtue, or to countenance and en-

P R E F A C E.

courage vice. As intention constitutes the fact; so every attempt to recommend the practice and facilitate the pursuit of virtue deserves approbation: and though the performance be not exhibited in the attractive decorations of art, or finished with all the captivating graces of excellence, yet the well-meant endeavour deserves all the echoes of applause, and merits the recommendations of honest praise. But when the performance is evidently calculated to mislead, to misrepresent, and, instead of encouraging the practice of virtue, to pourtray vice in all the bewitching colours of fascination, to hold the lure of perdition before the eyes of the inconsiderate, and gradually entice the unthinking youth into the ruinous snares of vice and folly; what reprehension, what punishment is
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P R E F A C E.

equivalent to the enormity of the crime! To animadvert with severity upon such a procedure, to condemn such a species of black criminality with the utmost force of language, frequently has no other effect than to excite the malicious sneer of contempt, or the more desperate tone of infernal imprecation. To what remedy then can we have recourse for the suppression of such an enormity? To no other than the civil power, which ought to be not only the guardian of our lives and properties, but likewise of our morals; for whenever there is a scandalous relaxation of morals, the effect will be proportionate on our actions. Thus thoughts produce actions, and actions are amenable to the laws. To act without deliberation, demonstrates folly; to act contrary to conviction,

P R E F A C E.

tion, bespeaks inconsistency, if not guilt. A little reflection, in the breast of a rational being, would produce remorse; but experience shews, that thousands of individuals seem to be incapable of this exertion, though a simple impulse of the power of ratiocination.

It is a melancholy fact, that the present age has given encouragement to several productions of literature written in defiance of religion, in contempt of virtue, and in open violation of the decrees of the Legislature. They are the ebullition of corrupt minds and vicious hearts. To observe a periodical publication, continued from month to month, from year to year, issuing from the press, and publicly advertised, replete with all the destructive charms of immorality, and the poison of obscenity, is a disgrace to our police, and a lasting satire on the
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P R E F A C E.

community. Fraught with all that luscious description which is calculated to inflame the passions and corrupt the heart, it is sought after with precipitation and perused with avidity; the picture captivates the judgement and fascinates the understanding; and when every scene of incontinence is described with all the elegance of expression and vivacity of remark, it is no wonder if many a gay and inconsiderate youth falls an early victim to these seducing portraits of wanton lasciviousness. The mind is gradually subjugated to guilt, from the perusal of such pernicious works, before the temptation approaches; and when it does approach, it meets with no resistance, the seeds of virtue being totally eradicated, and no compunction follows the original commission of the crime. An iteration sometimes

P R E F A C E.

produces pleasure, seldom creates pain. Thus an obduracy in guilt is confirmed; an impenitency in vice established. One crime engenders another; and what at first was deemed trivial and entertaining, becomes, from a continuation, culpable and vicious. So momentous is the proper employment of our time, that if we pertinaciously misapply those minutes which ought to be devoted to some laudable pursuit, the activity of our mind, the irregular wildness of an over-heated imagination, will by insensible degrees pervert our original though virtuous intention, and lead it spontaneously into the paths of dereliction.

A novel, whether founded on a real or fictitious story, may be made the vehicle of instruction and amusement, whence the aged may derive delight, and
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P R E F A C E.

the young direction; which the unsullied eye of chastity may peruse with pleasure, and where the modest cheek of innocence need not to dread the sordid taint of corruption. That picture of life and manners which is requisite to fabricate a plot within the bounds of probability, needs not the salacious recommendation of wantonness and lasciviousness. The judicious reader will heartily condemn, whilst the injudicious will be easily corrupted. A story, though not conducted by all the deceptions of art, nor expressed in the strains of elegance, may nevertheless be instructive and amusing. The morality which pervades the whole, will be conspicuous to every observer; and from even a cursory perusal, the superficial reader may arise with his intentions ameliorated, his propensities corrected, and his judgement informed.

P R E F A C E.

But when the work is calculated solely to amuse, where the passions are pourtrayed in all the lasciviousness of description, where the errors of the human heart are palliated by all the charms of language, where the finest feelings of the mind are pathetically exhibited, and every succeeding scene of delinquency corroborated by the past; it requires more fortitude, nay even philosophy, than falls to the share of the majority of mankind, to arise from the perusal without having contracted some little taint of corruption. The mischief may be latent, and at first scarcely perceptible, yet in a moment of inconsideration may acquire an impetuosity irresistible and boundless.

In the following volumes, the unhappiness resulting from the arbitrary temper of a parent is attempted to be delineated. His opinions relative to the

P R E F A C E.

the implicit submission of a child to the absurd and over-bearing decisions of paternal authority, are shewn to be repugnant to the laws of nature, and the mutual dependance subsisting betwixt parent and child. That obedience which is authoritatively required by the parent, without ever consulting the inclinations of the child, even in the important article of marriage, is certainly productive of many evils. For while children are born with passions to stimulate, and inclinations to chuse, it is but reasonable to suppose, that they ought to be treated with some little deference and respect in an affair wherein their future happiness is minutely interwoven. They ought to be directed, not compelled. The experience of age can take a larger and more comprehen-

P R E F A C E.

five view of life; can form a clearer and more accurate opinion of effects proceeding from certain causes, than the impetuosity of youth is capable of: yet in the unbiassed decisions of nature and reason, this can confer no indefeasible right on age to impose restrictions upon youth which are repugnant to their immediate and future happiness. Let all duty and obedience, all love and esteem, be paid by a child to the care and tenderness of a parent, whose diligence and fostering attention cannot easily be compensated; yet certainly there are impositions against which duty will revolt, restraints at which nature and reason will recoil, without deservedly incurring the imputation of ingratitude. Wretchedness and misery are poor equivalents for sacrificing our own opinions at the glittering altars of interest.

P R E F A C E.

terest and ambition ; which, if voluntarily undertaken, should be born without a sigh ; but if imposed, should excite our pity and commiseration.

From these considerations I conclude, that a child may recede from the determinations of a parent, without actually deserving the opprobrious censure of filial ingratitude. An ingenuous mind will not readily give offence, even where a magisterial prohibition produces pain ; and would rather suffer without complaining, than bear the odium of what may be deemed a rational opposition. But there are few instances in life, where it is not the incumbent duty of the child to sacrifice his own opinion to the superior authority of a parent, in order, if possible, to establish that social peace and happiness which ought to continue
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P R E F A C E.

unimpaired between such near and relative connexions. Whether an uncontrouled indulgence of the inclination in marriage, in every station of life, would really be productive of a mutual reciprocation of happiness, is a problem that requires to be demonstrated ; and certainly, in a civilized state, experience will never be able to draw a definitive conclusion. The existing positive evils resulting from the inhibitions of paternal authority, might not be remedied or counterbalanced by any real good, the certain issue of an experiment of the contrary conduct. Direction to young persons is indispensably necessary ; and who so proper to stretch out the directing hand, as him who gave them being ? Lenity will frequently prevail more than authority, and persuasion than force.

P R E F A C E,

force. Yet there is a strange perverseness in some dispositions, which can never perfectly be subdued, either by gentle or restrictive measures; and experience demonstrates, that it is an enemy to the peace of its possessor, and a deadly poison to his happiness. The line of duty and disobedience, in most instances, is very evident; in some, not so easily discerned. Compliance will often ensure peace, but rarely destroy it: and this we ought to believe as an undoubted fact, that in a marriage establishment, the happiness of the child is the principal motive of the parent. If he errs, he errs in the cause of tenderness and benevolence. But if, from a certain combination of circumstances, some degree of collusion be discovered; if ambition usurp the place of inclination, and interest

P R E F A C E.

terest of affection ; a non-compliance with parental requisition is perhaps necessary, if not justifiable.

The multiplicity of publications of a similar nature, might preclude any apology for the appearance of more. There are few incidents in life which have not been pourtrayed, few traits of character which have not been delineated, by the exquisite touches of several eminent masters ; so that there is little more left for their successors in the same line of literature, than to tread in the humble path of imitation. When this task, so humiliating to a man of genius, is performed with taste and judgement, the work, though destitute of originality, will be read by the intelligent with candour, by the judicious with indulgence.

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P R E F A C E.

Incident, though essentially necessary to this species of composition, is not certainly the only requisite to fabricate a complete performance. Incidents, when combined and managed with art, serve to amuse the attention, but seldom contribute to inform the understanding; but when a concatenation of sentiment and incident pervades the whole, the imagination is amused, and the judgement instructed. As to instruct is much more meritorious than to amuse; so the reader who is accustomed to deliberate, will derive pleasure and instruction from a work which the careless and inconsiderate will deem insufferably dull and tedious. To be entertained, is pleasing; to be instructed, profitable; and should any individual, either as parent or child, reap the least advantage

P R E F A C E.

tage from the perusal, the Author will think himself amply repaid for his trouble in the composition of this humble publication.



THE

T H E
D E N I A L.

L E T T E R I.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

DEAR SIR,

IN compliance with your request when I last saw you, I have embraced the earliest opportunity of acquainting you with the cause and place of my retreat. You hinted at our last interview, that common report, and your own suggestions, had induced you to conclude, that some important domestic connexions of a very delicate nature, but which merited my disapprobation, were the motives that must have determined me to this precipitate and hazardous procedure. Your suggestions were

were certainly right; but when I have explained the particulars, I hope the friend of my youth will not altogether condemn my conduct;—a conduct that has hitherto been regulated by the invariable rules of virtue, and the unerring laws of rectitude;—a conduct, which, though not free from many errors, and the concomitant lapses of heedless youth, yet I can boast to be untainted with the shameless commission of flagrant vices, or the unblushing profligacy of deliberate guilt. This you will probably deem as the vaunt of egotism. But you know your Wilton. The experience of many years has only cemented our hearts the closer; and that affection which commenced with our earliest youth, has never yet suffered any diminution.

As a proof of my attachment to the rules of virtue, I scarcely need to remind you of the many attacks I have suffered from the devoted sons of pleasure, and the thoughtless children of infamy. Ridicule and argument have alternately failed in
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making a convert of me to what I ever held, and I hope ever shall hold, in the utmost horror and detestation. The former was used as raillery ; the latter in adducing proofs to substantiate, that the major part of the Christian World has nearly for two thousand years been immersed in the labyrinth of error. Though I was well acquainted with the whole scope of their ratiocination, I never yet could laugh, but have frequently heaved the unavailing sigh of pity for those giddy inconsiderates.

You will say, this is all self-praise, and an attempt to exculpate myself, where there is no accusation. But probably it may serve to extenuate what by many may be deemed a crime, and what I shall develope to you without the least prevarication or reserve.

You well know I have been seven years from England, during which time I have visited all the principal cities in Europe, examined all the curiosities there exhibited, conversed with men and things solely for

for the acquisition of knowledge; and though I long trod on classic ground, every day encreased my avidity; and had I not received a peremptory command from my honoured father to return, I know not of what continuance my absence might have been.

While I was at Florence a second time, actually meditating a journey to Egypt, and concerting measures for my conveyance, I received a letter from my father, couched in a very authoritative style, commanding my immediate return, and assigning as a reason for his command, that he had affianced me to the daughter of Sir George Silvertop. This commercial dealing in matrimonial affairs, you know, I always disapproved of, from its interested views, from its similitude to buying and selling, and the more than probability of no affection existing between the parties thus connected. Nevertheless, in conformity to the commands of my father, I made all preparation for my departure; and
though

though my heart were altogether free from any pre-engagement, yet I had forebodings, as it were by anticipation, that this would not be the woman of my choice; for love, which ought to be free and unfettered, nor bound by the shackles of authority, nor restrained by the avaricious curb of parental sway, ever spurns at the magisterial dictates of what the world deems prudential maxims. A young person of family and fortune, whose discretion is unimpeached, whose conduct has hitherto been irreproachable, and who is deemed capable in all other matters to steer his course through life with credit to himself and comfort to his relations, ought certainly to have a negative in that important case—of marriage—whereon his chief happiness in this world solely depends. You will say, this is natural, this is philosophical, but perhaps not prudential. So conclude our parents, and so have thought some of our Legislators.

In this train of thinking I arrived at Wilton-Hall, after a variety of deliberations, and fully determined not to sacrifice my happiness by an implicit obedience to my duty. To lead a woman worthy of all my love, amiable for every perfection, and deserving of all praise—to lead her to the sacred altar of Hymen, sacred by the laws of heaven, and revered by the laws of man—when thus circumstanced, if I could not bestow my heart where I bestowed my hand, it were an insult to the decrees of the Divinity, and a base trampling upon the wisdom of ages.—O my Benfield! how often have we discussed this subject, merely for the exercise of our intellectual acquisitions!—Little did I then think I should one day forfeit the affection of my father, for an attachment to opinions founded on impartial justice and unbiassed reason. But so it has happened.—Affection! duty! what are ye?

I acknowledge these digressions, and you must forgive them.

After

After the usual salutations and enquiries after the health of the family were over, my father abruptly asked me when I would fix my wedding-day. I cast a look of complacency upon him at so extraordinary an interrogation, and replied, I humbly hoped he would first permit me to see my destined bride, before I came to such a determination. He answered sharply, "Your duty in this business is to obey; mine to command. Sir George and I have settled the whole business to our mutual satisfaction, and it remains with you to act in obedience to our decisions."

I was proceeding to urge some arguments that I deemed rational and conclusive, when my mother interrupted me, and said, "My Lord, I conceive you have forgot that Sir George Silvertop and family are totally strangers to our son Henry; they have only resided in our neighbourhood three years, Henry hath been absent seven."—"The remark is just," returned his Lordship, "and though the marriage be

“ finally determined on, a visit or two to
“ Sir George’s, to satisfy his youthful cu-
“ riosity, can be of no moment ; therefore
“ I allow you,” continued he (addressing
himself to me), “ seven days ; at the expiration
“ of which I expect your unconditional ac-
“ ceptance of the happiness I have provided
“ for you. Experience through a life che-
“ quered with a variety of scenes has taught
“ me, that I have left nothing incomplete
“ in this important business. Your fortune
“ is not large, her’s is affluent ; your fa-
“ mily is noble, her’s but lately emerged
“ into notice. Such a connexion will be
“ advantageous to you, and honourable to
“ her.”

This speech being pronounced with a grave emphatic tone, and determined manner, commanded my silence ; and immediately my father left the room.

Having protracted this letter to an unusual length, I shall conclude with assuring you, that

I am Your’s, &c.

LET-

LETTER II:

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

MY father being retired, a profound silence ensued for some minutes, when I sat ruminating in a very serious mood on my strange reception after so long an absence. “Can there be a greater absurdity,” said I to myself, “than for a parent to compel the inclinations of a child to accept what is absolutely disagreeable, and even repugnant to his most anxious wishes, merely to gratify the aspiring throbbings of ambition, or the sordid grasp of avarice? O Happiness! what are thy bounds, where dost thou begin, or where dost thou terminate? in the implicit obedience of obsequious duty, or in the uncontrouled fruition of inclination?”

In the midst of this silent soliloquy I was interrupted by my honoured mother,

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who,

who, with a look that displayed her affection, mingled with the most tender regard, spoke as follows : “ My dearest Henry, “ you have been absent seven years ; “ during which long term I never openly expressed my dissatisfaction, or uttered a discordant murmur, lest your father should have construed it into a hint, which might have given birth to the idea that I wished your return. O Henry ! you have from the first dawning of your thought ever experienced my indulgence. It was with the most tender solicitude I watched over your infancy, and with all the joy of the fondest parent saw you ascending to maturity ; when in compliance with your ardent wishes, and the hopes of your intellectual improvement, I put a restraint upon my feelings, and suffered you to be torn from these arms, to pine and languish beneath the piercing throes of a long separation. You are now returned. Let me conjure you, if possible, to “ give

“ give a ready acquiescence to your father’s will. You are conscious, that nothing but his parental care could have induced him to promote this matrimonial connexion, to give you a permanent establishment in life, to assist you to maintain the splendour of your ancient house with a dignity suitable to its rank and honour. If you have formed no improper connection that will bias your inclination, let not a tender mother entreat in vain; let her not complain of ingratitude from a son, whose happiness from the moment of his birth she has promoted with the tenderest sensibility.”

She ceased. During the first part of this affectionate speech I kept my eyes fixed upon the floor, but raising them almost involuntarily, I riveted them upon the face of the venerable speaker. Towards the conclusion I saw the tear glisten in her eye: I rose, and stepped towards her—just as it began to roll down her aged cheek. I kissed it away. My heart was full—I

heaved a sigh, and walked to the window. My confusion was apparent, and my feelings—O Benfield! re-consider the scene, and spare me the description.—After a temporary pause, I recovered some resolution, and turned round, when I saw my ever-honoured mother's face suffused in tears, and my two sisters overwhelmed with the sympathetic yet pleasing contagion.

After two or three efforts, I begged pardon for having been the involuntary cause of the slightest sorrow to the best of parents; and begged leave to assure her, that from a thorough conviction of my duty, a consciousness of an unerring rectitude, I never would disgrace by an improper alliance the dignity of my birth, or the untainted honour of my family.

Just as I had finished, my father entered with a countenance more placid than when he left us: yet he informed me in a very laconic manner, that I must prepare to visit Sir George Silvertop's family to-morrow; adding, I should then have at least the satisfaction,

tisfaction, if not the pleasure, of seeing my intended bride. I made no reply, but notified my assent by a most respectful bow.

The conversation now took a general turn, and assumed a different appearance; for diffidence, mistrust, and the most distant respect, gave place to pleasing effusions of familiarity, and the more amiable reciprocations of a soothing affability. To the many kind interrogatories relative to my pursuits, my amusements, and studies, whilst abroad, I gave ready and ingenuous answers, which seemed to diffuse an agreeable pleasure to the whole little circle, and parted us for the evening, with all the external satisfaction that separate views and discordant opinions can participate of.

After the usual formalities, I retired to my chamber; but my mind was ill at ease. Having walked a few times over the floor, and attempted in vain to calm my disordered thoughts, I sat down, and, in the midst of these perturbations, wished to take an impartial view of that state, which my

father had either kindly or officiously planned out for me. I wished to divest myself of prejudice, and all previous bias ; and hoped, by a candid and ingenuous investigation, to decide against myself, and acknowledge the commission of an error, in ever attempting to expostulate with commands which, custom says, ought to be obeyed without the least prior examination. When I remonstrated with myself, why I did not immediately accord with these principles, which had been early inculcated, and taught as an irrefragable duty, I found both my reason and judgement strongly dissentient, and ready with a variety of arguments to prove the futility of those maxims, the fatal tendency of which, too implicitly relied upon, has been productive of irreparable mischief, and unsuspected criminality.

The duty which a child owes to a parent certainly has bounds, the transgression of which by a parent may justify a child from the odious imputation of disobedience.

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In many affairs relative to life, experience hath taught the parent, that youth without his instruction may probably be guilty of many and egregious errors. Under this impression, and it is certainly just, the parent hopes, by his salutary admonitions, to point out the rocks upon which inexperienced youth are too apt to suffer shipwreck; whilst his parental care may delineate those destructive vices and pernicious follies, which, like a whirlpool, envelope the thoughtless and inconsiderate in the inextricable labyrinth of perdition. Here it is an incumbent duty on the child to pay a cheerful acquiescence, and rapturously rely on that solicitude, which fed, watched over, and protected his infancy; and which now, in the riper years of maturity, anxiety, and concern, endeavours to lead him through the snares, the intricacies, and the fatigues of life with safety. But in so important an affair as love and marriage, where the affections ought to be chiefly consulted as sole judges in the arbitration, to hear the

C 6 dictates

dictates of parental authority enforced, and the precepts of unconditional submission implicitly adhered to, is certainly a stretch beyond that power which either nature or reason allows.—O Benfield! it is my duty to love, to reverence, and obey my parent! He certainly loves me, then whence this anxiety to make me miserable? Has a child no inclinations, or ought he not to indulge those inclinations even in the cause of virtue? Ought he to be merely passive, and moved mechanically by the external impulses of duty and obedience!

Life is but too pregnant with examples which militate against this doctrine. Marriages concluded without love, are seldom productive of content. Indifference succeeds enjoyment. Coolness promotes strife, contention, and ill-nature. Separation is the only lenitive; but how is this separation obtained? By a series of criminality and vice, which, however fashionable, and varnished with the specious epithet of Pleasurable Follies, is nevertheless to be execrated, as derogatory to and destructive

tive of the best interests of morality and religion.

Distracted betwixt duty and judgement, I passed the night in the most uncomfortable manner. Sometimes I determined to comply with my father's commands without hesitation or remonstrance: immediately Indifference occurred to my memory with all her concomitant train of evils, and I revolted at the idea with horror. Again I thought of my disobedience, with all the consequences attendant thereon;—displeasure, forfeiture of affection, alienation, and perhaps a total banishment.—Torn with these discordant agitations, I threw myself upon my bed, but never once thought of invoking sleep: my thoughts were unsettled, a chilly languor overwhelmed me: tho' awake, I lay in a real state of dull torpidity.—The cock crew; the sound pierced my ears, and once again recalled my senses to their proper action; my scattered thoughts resumed a train of ratiocination, and I broke out into the following soliloquy.—

“ Happy

“ Happy, thrice happy bird ! Without
“ sorrow for the past, or anxiety for the
“ future, thou enjoyest the sweets of life,
“ without a consciousness of any of its
“ corroding solitudes. Instinct alone
“ teaches thee to prefer the good, whilst
“ reason, man’s boasted reason, is often
“ so grossly misled, as to give the prefe-
“ rence to that pursuit, the completion of
“ which is inevitable perdition.—Again !
“ Dost thou rebuke me for disobedience ?
“ I own it to be, in many instances, a cry-
“ ing offence.—Happy bird ! I had almost
“ said, I envy thee. The husbandman
“ knows thy call ; it portends the hour of
“ sleep is gone : he rises cheerful and ex-
“ hilarated from his rest—pursues con-
“ tented the toils of the day—the dews of
“ the evening warn him home—again
“ he sleeps—again thou rousest him
“ —and thus flits away his even undif-
“ turbed round of life.”—But—O Ben-
field, I am weary with the description, and
conclude as usual, that

I am ever Yours.

LET-

LETTER III.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

IN the midst of my nocturnal reveries, the rumbling of some carriage wheels attracted my attention. Looking out at my window, I perceived the glorious luminary of the day was several hours advanced in his journey. Surprized and wondering at the rapid progress of time, I received a summons to breakfast, which, after a little hurry and previous adjustment, I readily obeyed.

No sooner had I entered the parlour, than the eyes of the whole family were fixed upon me, surveying me with mute attention. Not conscious of any thing that could produce this survey, I was much disconcerted; when, after a pause of a few seconds, my honoured mother asked me how I had slept last night; at the same time

time eyeing me with a look of pity mingled with regret.—I replied, “ Pray Madam, may I be so bold as to ask, what prompts the interrogation?”—“ Your appearance, Henry, seems to indicate a sleepless night, or an improper hurry and inattention this morning to your person; but if I am not mistaken, the former has been your portion.”—She looked wistfully upon me—my soul felt the sympathetic glance—it thrilled thro’ my whole frame—the tear stood ready to fall—but recollection suppressed the filial tribute, and I promised, with a half-forced smile, to rectify any mistake which might have arisen from a pardonable inadvertency.

My apology was readily accepted by the ladies; but my father expressed his disapprobation by observing, that such inattention was certainly culpable, as it obviously intimated disrespect to him, or an unpardonable forgetfulness of his commands: the latter he concluded could not possibly be; and therefore I was arraigned.

raigned on the former charge. I protested with humility against his conclusion, and with reluctance he accepted my protestation.

Breakfast being finished, it was next deemed requisite that I should be equipped anew; which etiquette I readily complied with, and immediately underwent a tedious operation from a French valet, whom my father has long entertained in his family, from a predilection that he is more faithful, more alert, and more obsequious, than any of his native countrymen. The last accomplishment he has an absolute right to; the two former will admit of some litigation.

Being thus metamorphosed from my morning dishabille, I stepped into the carriage with my father, and off we drove to the place of our destination. During our journey I received several cautionary aphorisms relative to the duty of children towards their parents, and the happiness which is the immediate and certain consequence of obedience, especially in matrimonial affairs;

fairs; since it was perfectly consonant to reason and experience, that parents, who anxiously presided over the welfare of their children, and whom the experience of many years knowledge of life and manners had taught wisdom, and given them a decided superiority, should direct and determine the inconsiderateness and inexperience of youth. I chose not to contradict him, but often nodded my assent to what I solemnly disapproved, being totally absorbed in the contemplation of my present critical situation, and fearful lest my remarks should embitter those hours which he meant to devote to the pleasing relaxations of conviviality.

The carriage stopped, and we were ushered into an apartment, where we were received by Sir George Silvertop, his lady, and daughter, with great formality, and the most punctilious respect. I was introduced alternately to all three.—During the continuance of our visit, which was protracted to the evening, I was very attentive to discover, if

if possible, the prevailing bias of a family with which my father was so solicitous to contract an alliance. I soon perceived Sir George to be an open, worthy, intelligent man, with strong natural parts unimproved by erudition, and communicative of the knowledge he had acquired by travel; and experience, for he had during several years filled some places of the greatest trust and responsibility in the East Indies, with honour to himself and satisfaction to his employers, and where he accumulated a very opulent fortune, upon which he had retired. Yet I had the mortification to see this very worthy man frequently contradicted by his lady in the midst of some narrations, the recital of which seemed to give him peculiar felicity. Upon these abrupt interruptions he always discontinued, whilst she took up the thread of the story, which she narrated with all the circumlocutions of the most tedious detail. This, with several exceptionable traits of peculiarity, gave me no favourable opinion

opinion of her character. She was assuming without dignity, garrulous without communication, and contradictory even to vulgarity.

As Miss preserved an inviolable silence, and seemed altogether to act, to speak, and even to look, by the directions of her mother, I could not with the most minute observation form any adequate idea either of her acquisitions or understanding. Her dress was splendid without elegance, formal without neatness, costly and fashionable without simplicity. I have always thought there is a criterion in dress, as in all other things, which ought to regulate, as much as possible, the votaries of fashion. Nature is an infallible guide, and the further you deviate from her restrictions, the further you wander from simplicity, and approach to deformity. In these decisions I shall be severely censured by the fashionable, by many laughed at, and by many pitied, as void of taste and wanting in civility.

Miss

Miss Silvertop was far from a regular beauty. She was tall, genteel, but ungraceful. When she was spoke to, she was very awkward in making a reply; not from mere bashfulness, but from a certain uncouth manner, either natural or acquired, which cast a shade of ridicule over her whole behaviour. Though of a fair complexion, her countenance was fullen and forbidding; and all her attempts at cheerfulness and hilarity were forced, constrained, and abortive. These observations convinced me there must either be a natural defect in her intellects, or that her education must have been very contracted and unpolite. This you may conclude to be the result of deliberate partiality; yet I must avow to you, it is a delineation I have not attempted to heighten by any additional tinge to the original.

Dinner being over, and a few glasses having circulated, Lady Silvertop withdrew; and after some significant nods between the old gentlemen, they presently

sently followed her example.—The disgust I had received from the peremptory commands of my father, was not removed by the specimens I had seen of my intended bride. My situation at present was precisely the same I had a right to expect, though I had actually made no previous preparations for the intended interview. However, mustering up some resolution, I thought it more preferable to enter upon a conversation, however nugatory, than to sit looking one upon the other in a tedious suspense.

“ Pray Ma’am,” says I, “ which is your favourite amongst the modern Dramatic Authors?” She fixed her eyes upon me, but made no reply. Supposing she had heard my interrogation indistinctly, I repeated it again very articulately, when her vacant stare and continued silence convinced me that my question was to her totally unintelligible. This somewhat disconcerted me, for I thought I had chosen a topic peculiarly adapted to her attainments,
and

and with which most of the young ladies I am acquainted with are very conversant. I made a second attempt at a little rational confabulation, by asking, to which of those immortal performances the *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained* she gave the preference? After a serious pause of some seconds, she answered, "Pray Sir, what are they?" Amazement almost struck me speechless, when I reflected that a young lady of the age of twenty, with a fortune of fifty or sixty thousand pounds, should betray such total ignorance on a subject which is not unknown even to many children at school.

Despairing of success on a topic of literature, I asked her, with a smile of familiarity almost dictated by contempt, what was her opinion of the new dresses exhibited on the last Court-day, as they were detailed to us in the public prints? I had scarcely finished my question, when her countenance brightened, and she displayed so intimate a knowledge of all the etiquette of a Birth-day Drawing-room, and

com-

commented so *learnedly* upon the finery, flounces, and furbelows requisite to decorate the persons of those young ladies whose highest happiness is to *figure* at the Ball on that occasion, that, before she had concluded her *elaborate* remarks, I frequently wished for some intervention of her volubility: but having got upon a favourite subject, she demonstrated that she was as equal to the discussion of it, as she was ignorant of the former part of the conversation.

Finding her communicative in one particular, I supposed she might be so in another. On this supposition, I ventured to touch upon the subject of our meeting, by observing, that I hoped she was particularly acquainted with the motive of my visit, so as to make any explanation on that head unnecessary. She replied, her mama had acquainted her that she was to marry Lord Wilton's son; and what her mama said, she never contradicted, for she was very sure her mama would do nothing but what was for her good. I answered, "But, my dear Miss, had you no reluc-

" tance

“ tance in complying with the commands
“ of your mama, to marry a person whom
“ you never saw ?” She said, her mama
directed her in every thing, and she trusted
she would never direct her wrong. I ap-
plauded her obedience, yet observed, that
some instances might occur, where her duty
might suffer many severe trials. If she
were commanded to marry a gentleman she
did not, or could not love, her compliance
was entailing misery and unhappiness on
both the unfortunate parties. She con-
fessed that objection had never once oc-
curred to her, but she confided in her ma-
ma’s prudence, who would take care to
provide a husband for her, whom if she did
not love, yet she would marry, to please
her mama.

This irksome and uninteresting conver-
sation was interrupted by the entrance of
my Lord, Sir George and Lady Silvertop.
After a short interval, the carriage appeared
at the door. I had scarce taken my seat,
when my father asked me, in a very serious

accent, what progress I had made with the
 young lady? I replied, "No progress is
 " necessary, my Lord, as the young lady
 " is all obedience to the commands of her
 " mama."—"A noble precedent, a noble
 " precedent!" exclaimed my Lord, with
 much vehemence; "I hope, Henry, this
 " young lady's obedience will teach you
 " your duty, and learn you not to receive
 " with a sullen obstinacy the commands
 " of a father, who has an absolute authori-
 " ty to impose any conditions upon a son,
 " let him be never so refractory or contu-
 " macious."—I made no reply to this arbi-
 trary determination, though I saw it was
 expected; for I was afraid, if I spoke my
 real sentiments on this occasion, I should,
 instead of conciliating, only irritate that
 disposition already too vehement.—He
 continued: "I perceive your discontent;
 " but marriage will soon dissipate your cha-
 " grin; and if real happiness be not in-
 " sured, opulence will."

The

The carriage stopped—I was released, and I will release you from reading any further at present.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R IV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

THIS night passed with little more relaxation from despondency than the former. I reflected and debated with myself on the propriety or impropriety of not conforming to my father's magisterial commands, and on the probability or improbability of ever enjoying the least gleam of happiness or content from this projected union with a wealthy idiot. I determined that it was an utter impossibility, from our pursuits, our education, and our tempers being so discordant and incompatible. Then I reflected on the consequence of my final refusal. This was an event of which I durst not take a serious survey. It

D 2 seemed

seemed to me a dreadful precipice, on which I was already elevated, and from which one erratic step might precipitate me, never more to rise. In the perplexity of this contemplation, I involuntarily exclaimed, "O man, how inconsistent, how fallible are all thy decrees! Opinion rules thee, and opinion deceives thee! Experience, that sage instructress, thou ever present to guide thee in thy wanderings, and protect thee from misfortunes, is ever treated as an alien, and her instructive lessons disregarded! Strange infatuation! Strange, yet true!"

As soon as I had entered the breakfast-room, and taken a survey of the company, which consisted of my honoured parents and my two amiable sisters, I thought I perceived something on the countenances of all which seemed to labour for parturition. My father spoke with fullness and authority; my mother answered with unaccustomed gravity and distant respect; my sisters replied now and then with a cautious timidity, which obviously manifested some
harsh

harsh restraint upon those dispositions which were ever lively, cheerful, and communicative. I had not sat many minutes before a total silence ensued. I then perceived the eyes of all fixed upon me. Agitated and nearly motionless, I cast my eyes downwards, and must have exhibited many and certain symptoms of confusion; for, upon a retrospect of my manner at this instant, I cannot recollect one circumstance but what bespeaks the most ridiculous errors of an absent and uncollected mind.

With an amiable wish to relieve my distress, my affectionate mother addressed me in a tone of soft sensibility: "My dear Henry, I am afraid the air of your native country, after so long an absence in the warmer regions of France and Italy, is not congenial to your health, as you seem to have acquired a slight indisposition this morning." The sound of her voice dispelled my reverie; and I replied, that though the climate of France and Italy was more mild and temperate than that of England, yet, as a native of

the latter, I felt no hesitation in giving it the preference, as more consentaneous to the temperature and constitution of an Englishman, unless debilitated by intemperance, than all the warmer regions I had hitherto visited. "Pray, Henry," said my sister Antonet, "if our native air be more salubrious than that of the Continent—" "Peace!" exclaimed my father sternly; "this is not an hour to talk of trifles—we have other business, that must not only be discussed but concluded, before I can allow such temporising nothings to be repeated in my company."—This dogmatical mandate was received with the most profound awe and silence—I saw the anxiety of her I deemed an injured parent—I perceived her feelings began to work; she heaved a heavy sigh; she cast a tender look of affection upon me, then upon my sisters, and rose from her chair. She made a feint to leave the room, but, upon recollection, walked a few times across the floor, and was again seated. My sisters looked upon
one

one another, then upon their mother, with all the fervor of suspense, and seemed with their looks to ask permission to retire. This was not signified, and they continued.

To attempt to describe my own thoughts or feelings at this critical juncture, would be an unpardonable absurdity, as nothing but tumultuous and disjointed ideas presented themselves to my distracted imagination—not distracted between hope and fear, for hope I had none, being too well acquainted with the inflexibility of my father's temper, when prompted by either interest or ambition, to suppose I could extricate myself out of the labyrinth in which authority had involved me—fear was predominant: I dreaded the fatal moment, when he should require my assent to an union I utterly detested, rendered more disgusting by the arbitrary manner in which my consent was demanded, sternly and tyrannically demanded.

The moment, the dreadful moment came—I tremble at the recital. “Henry,” said

my father, “ you have seen, you have con-
“ versed with Miss Silvertop; you were pur-
“ posely left alone with her yesterday, and
“ while Sir George and I were finally con-
“ cluding the agreement to our mutual sa-
“ tisfaction, I hope you had the resolution
“ to acquaint the young lady with the mo-
“ tive of your visit, and your ready acqui-
“ escence with our determinations.”—
“ May I hope, my Lord,” replied I, “ that
“ the union between Miss Silvertop and
“ me is not finally agreed upon, as I have
“ insurmountable obstacles to—” —“ In-
“ surmountable obstacles !” returned he;
“ answer me this instant, and without du-
“ plicity, Are you married ? Hath some fo-
“ reign virago cozened you of your liber-
“ ty, of your affection, of your person ?—
“ But I will take the precaution she shall
“ not cozen you of your estate. Answer
“ upon your honour.” —“ Upon my ho-
“ nour, I am not married.” —“ Are you
“ preengaged ?” —“ I am not.” —“ Are you
“ in love with some other lady ?” —“ Not
“ in

“ in the least, my Lord.”—“ As you are not
“ married, nor engaged, nor in love with
“ any lady, and yet demur to accept of
“ Miss ~~Silver~~top with so ample a fortune,
“ your behaviour seems to me enwrap in
“ ambiguity. I therefore request an ex-
“ planation, in order that your insur-
“ mountable obstacles may appear with
“ some degree of plausibility, and your
“ opposition to my will supported by ar-
“ guments cogent and conclusive.”—
“ My Lord, your knowledge of men and
“ things, your researches into the human
“ mind, must long before this have con-
“ vinced you, that all restrictions upon the
“ inclinations are nugatory and ineffica-
“ cious. The will hath a certain prero-
“ gative, in the exercise of which it ad-
“ mits of no compulsory methods to cor-
“ rode its happiness. It thinks, it acts
“ with spontaneity; and when opposed,
“ suffers a diminution of its pleasure. To
“ think and to act with freedom, consti-
“ tute one of the chief privileges of human

“ life, when those thoughts and actions
“ originate from the pure source of un-
“ contaminated religion and morality.”—
“ Henry, I asked you for your obsta-
“ cles; you said you had insurmountable
“ ones to your marriage with Miss Silver-
“ top; and you have given me a dissertation
“ on the prerogative of the will. This is
“ no place to exercise your logical pow-
“ ers; you must give me an explicit rea-
“ son, a definitive cause, why you object
“ to this honourable union, that I may
“ know henceforward how to regulate my
“ future conduct towards you. Speak;
“ demur not!”—“ With all deference to
“ you as my parent who gave me life, with
“ all submission to you as my elder in years,
“ I beg and entreat you not to attempt
“ to compel me to give my hand where
“ I cannot bestow my heart. Insuperable
“ barriers prevent our union. She has been
“ educated in vulgarity, and trained up in
“ the most abject servility. She seems not
“ to have an idea beyond her toilet, and—”
“ Hold,

“ Hold, Sir, not one syllable more of abuse.
“ Your refined notions of politeness, etiquette, education, and courtesy, have led
“ your understanding astray; and I must inform you, that a fortune of fifty thousand
“ pounds is more than a balance for the
“ whole of them. I will hear no more of
“ your equivocations, but insist this instant on a positive acceptance or refusal;
“ take heed, and beware of a denial.”

He spoke this, as he rose from his chair, with so furious a tone, and violent a manner, as wholly discomposed and intimidated me. I cast a look of commiseration upon my honoured mother—she was sitting like a statue, pale and motionless. I rose from my seat, and dropping upon my knees before her, conjured her to assist me in this distress: “ Speak, Madam, speak to my
“ Lord, and endeavour to alleviate this
“ pressing misfortune.” My heart was full, —my grief stooped further utterance—my bosom swelled with sorrow—at length my tears began to flow, and I experienced some

relief. Casting up my eyes, I saw my loving parent in a sympathetic flow—I rose to apologize for my weakness, and administer consolation—I grasped her hand while she wiped away the tears from my pallid cheeks: she trembled; then, with an agitated and faint voice, said, “May I presume, my Lord—” “Not one syllable on the subject,” returned my father, “but from himself.”—My sisters left the room, and, though commanded to return, I saw them no more. This disobedience added vehemence to his irritability, and he demanded my immediate determination. I hesitated—he insisted.—“My honoured father, forgive your only son in this instance, where his inclination cannot coincide with his duty. It is the first—” “And the last time,” cried he, “that you shall have it in your power to oppose my will. It is, and shall be, an irreversible law to you; and here I solemnly forswear my affinity to thee; I reject and cast thee off as an alien to my blood.”

“—May’st

“ May’st thou be an unceasing wanderer
“ upon the face of the earth, which re-
“ fuses to satisfy thy hunger with the
“ fruits it produces; and (here falling
“ upon his knees) may the great God of
“ Heaven and Earth—” —Here, with a
violent, and almost involuntary motion, I
flew to the door, resolving not to hear the
awful conclusion of his curse.—I fled, and
stopped not until exhausted nature sunk
with fatigue; I threw myself upon the
grass, and after a few ineffectual moans on
my hapless and forlorn condition, the som-
brous touch of sleep closed my eyes, and I
sunk to repose.

I am, &c.

LET.

LETTER V.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

HOW long I continued in this state of insensibility, I cannot at present recollect; but this I can assure you, that I never slept sounder on a bed of down than I did here, with the cold grass for my pillow, and no other covering than the canopy of Heaven.

I am now convinced from observation and experience, that the real wants of man are very few, and those few soon supplied. Imaginary wants are innumerable, and possession, instead of satiating, only gives a fresh stimulus to the inclination. Hence all that melancholy, uneasiness, and languor, so incident to a life of inactivity. Enjoyment, from continual possession, loses all its pleasure, hope is annihilated, and without hope there is no real happiness.

O Benfield! what is man? so various,
so incomprehensible! this hour pursuing,
with

with avidity, what the next he condemns, and views with the indignant glance of horror. The moment of trepidation passes away, and the same scene is pursued, enjoyed, and again undergoes the same scrutiny and condemnation. This strange versatility of the human species deserves some degree of reprehension; yet who shall be the censor, since we all participate in the degree or in the extreme of this animadversion. Whilst the passions agitate the mind with such a variety of impulses, the same inconsistency, the same improbabilities of character, will constantly recur to observation; and yet, destroy the passions, and you destroy all pleasures.

Must I apologize for this digression? I hope my friend will peruse with an eye of candour, whatever slips of a similar nature may have fallen from my pen in the relation of this uninteresting narrative.

I was awaked by a certain rumbling noise, which seemed to be at no great distance,

tance, but of which, at first, I could form no distinct perception. I supposed it came nearer.—I arose, and, looking around with eagerness, I perceived a carriage driving with great impetuosity down a declivity towards the place where I stood. Upon its coming nearer, I knew it to be the Post-coach, and calling to the driver, he stopped. I asked him, if he could supply me with a seat: he answered in the affirmative. I entered, quite careless of my destination, and never alighted but once from the vehicle until we arrived at Morpeth, a little borough in the county of Northumberland. Finding myself much fatigued, my spirits jaded, and my mind discomposed, I resolved to go no farther. Having discharged the account of my conveyance, I took up my lodging at the inn. Here I met with accommodation, entertainment, and civility, much beyond my expectation. Wishing to be alone, I was politely indulged in my wish, without once suffering the intrusive rudeness
of

of the waiter, or the more offensive petulance of the landlord. I began to ruminate, but nature wished to repose; I indulged her.

In the morning, finding myself much refreshed, I walked along the banks of the river Wansbeck, revolving in my mind the perplexed uncertainty of my present situation, the disappointment of one part, the discontent and distress of the other part of the unhappy family at Wilton Park, rendered unhappy and distressed by a conduct which, if reprehensible for disobedience, I was not allowed time to rectify. Pushed on by the violent impetuosity of my honoured father, violent to me only in this instance, I was not even permitted to try whether my duty or inclination would preponderate. This very first act of contumacy ought not to have been unpardonable. Instead of those endearments, those affectionate greetings on the safe return of an absent son, what were my endearments? Authoritative commands, against which I was not permitted to

to expostulate, and probably my acquiescence would only have been productive of misery and wretchedness to me. The dearest and most tender of her sex was not allowed to remonstrate in my behalf. I feel—yes, I feel her pangs—I know her sensibility; but to whom shall she complain! My sisters, companions of my infancy, again we are separated! But when will the separation end? Alas! the thought is ominous—it may be a long, long time.—O, my friend, may you never experience the sorrow which now swells my throbbing breast!

The morning was serene, the air tepid, and the scenery pleasing and romantic. The little songsters of the woods were warbling on every bush; their wild melody was sweet, was soothing, was agreeable: I found some sensations of pleasure, some little relaxation from my sorrows, by an attention to the irregular but beautiful scenery, the untaught yet harmonious symphony of the groves. To indulge my feelings

feelings in their present impression, I gradually ascended a grassy eminence, from which I enjoyed a beautiful prospect, that comprehended several miles of the country all around me. The most prominent object on the landscape was the ruins of an old castle, which seemed to be mouldering very fast beneath the ruthless touch of time. The river Wansbeck rolled its little stream beneath my feet; the rocks rose in a grand irregular manner to a stupendous height, as far as the eye could stretch, covered with trees and underwood, whose foliage formed a scene of the most enlivening green. The little hamlets that were scattered over the face of the country, the cattle feeding in good inclosures, the distant song of the cheerful husbandman, contributed to raise my envy of the calm, the placid and inoffensive pleasures of a rural life; which may be envied, but never experienced among the elevated scenes of pomp, magnificence and grandeur: alluring, but empty names!

Pleased

Pleased with the general view of the country, I instantly formed the resolution of taking up my residence in the neighbourhood, and patiently wait the occurrence of some fortunate incident, which might restore me to my father, my family, and friends. I espied at a little distance a farm-house : it was small, but neat ; and while I was approaching, I observed first one and then another of the family come to the door, who, when, they saw me walking directly towards it, immediately ran in with some precipitation. I rapped, and instantly heard a good deal of bustle and shuffling within, when, after a pause of a few minutes, a woman rather advanced in years came to the door. I asked her for the master of the house. I was desired to walk in, and was shewn into a little room furnished with all the neatness and simplicity imaginable. The window and chimney-piece were ornamented with roses, pinks and woodbines, which diffused a most delightful fragrance ; and while I

was

was contemplating their beauties, the master of the little mansion entered. I turned round—he bowed, and desired me to be seated. I immediately acquainted him with the motive of my visit, and expressed my wish to become one of his family, if he could accommodate me with a single room; and whenever he wished I should remove, his single intimation should be my discharge:—he might name his own terms. He demurred, and seemed at a loss, how to determine. I asked him, if one guinea a week was equivalent to his wish. He replied, he thought it more than sufficient. This business being settled, I became a resident in a rural and sequestered situation on the banks of the Wansbeck, at a little village called Mitford-Grange.

I solemnly enjoin you not to discover the place of my retreat, not even to my sister Antonet. Let not your affection for the daughter betray the confidential secret of the brother: a secret, that probably may be prejudicial to my
future

future happiness, or a means to augment it. All events are in the womb of futurity; but while Hope, that pleasing seraph, is graciously implanted in the breast of frail humanity, let us bear our misfortunes with fortitude, and hope for a change to better times. This is a pleasure which is too often delusive, and cheats us in the moment of fruition. Yet Disappointment must confess, that Expectation has frequently enabled the unfortunate to bear with patience the incumbent pressure of inveterate evils. The long-wished-for hour of retribution comes—Happiness is grasped at—Happiness is not to be found; she evaporates as the mist of the morning, and who is able to trace the airy phantom?

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER VI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

HAVING an ardent desire to view the rural beauties of this sequestered spot, the next day I rambled into the fields, and walked I knew not whither. My mind was more at ease than it had been for several days before, and I found myself capable of participating of the real pleasures which a variety of engaging objects constantly presented to my mind. The fields were covered with an agreeable verdure ; the fragrant primrose and modest cowslip presented themselves at every step. The daisy, variegated with different hues, enamelled with its native beauties the ridge of every pasture. The Spring was in its glory. The trees were unfolding their fragrant buds, which shortly would spread a foliage, cooling, shadowy, and grateful, from the ensuing heats of Summer. The hawthorn bud was just bursting; its freshness

ness was cheering, its fragrance delightful. I was in a contemplative mood bordering upon melancholy, and a thousand beauties arose from simlar objects, which I had never before noticed. There is a certain agreeable pleasure resulting from the gloom of a gentle sorrow, and the more it is indulged the more it encreases, invigorates, and persuades. Solitude and silence are most congenial to its impressions; it seeks the shades of the one, the stillness of the other, and meditates with rapture over the sweet indulgence.

In this morning's excursion I strayed some miles from my home, and in my return I entered the park of Sir Robert Bertram, where stood the ruins of the old castle I lately mentioned. Though not an antiquarian, I felt a sudden impulse to enter and view the remains which had escaped the ravages of mordacious time. The scite was strong, being built upon an eminence; whether natural or artificial, I cannot determine. It had once been surrounded

rounded by a moat of great depth, and was deemed impregnable. But, alas! what are all the boasted works of man! Those walls, once raised by the utmost efforts of human art, are now tumbling in ponderous masses from their elevation, and rolling down the precipice with a crashing impetuosity. The mighty masses that lie scattered up and down the inner area, the tottering condition of the walls that are standing, demonstrate approaching ruin to the whole structure.

While I was contemplating the variety of objects around me, and little attentive to any thing at a distance, I was roused from my meditation by the sound of a female voice, which I thought was not far from me. I looked round, and perceived a gentleman and two ladies walking with a slow pace towards me. I was for moving off some other way, but from a consciousness of the impropriety of such a proceeding, I continued in my original situation. They advanced—I moved my hat, and made my

VOL. I.

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obeisance—

obeisance—they returned it, and stopped. The gentleman addressed me, and said, “ I perceive, Sir, you are taking a view of the solitary remains of this antient castle ; there is little left to excite expectation or gratify curiosity.”—I replied, “ I conceive much more pleasure, Sir, in viewing this building in ruins, than if it had been standing complete in all its antient strength and magnitude.”—“ Pray, Sir, may I presume to ask the reason why?” returned the gentleman.—“ The ruins of this castle, Sir, demonstrate the stability of the government, the progress of civilization the security of property, and the safety of the subject. The original cause of all those erections, was the direct reverse of what I have enumerated. Since the cause is destroyed, by an equal balance of power between the governors and the governed, these castles, the baneful effects of the feudal system, are daily mouldering away, under the merited frowns of cool neglect.”

The

The elder of the ladies replied, “ I think
“ myself very fortunate in meeting here
“ with so able an advocate for the demo-
“ lition of these old walls. I have re-
“ peatedly solicited Sir Robert to pull
“ them totally down, and cultivate the
“ land, which would then be productive
“ of some good ; but while it remains in
“ this condition, it produces nothing, and
“ scarcely attracts attention.”—The young
lady prevented my reply, by observing,
that she could never coalesce with these
opinions of Lady Bertram ; for she always
thought, there was some reverence to be
paid to these structures of antiquity.—“ I
“ would reverence nothing,” returned my
Lady, “ either antient or modern, but
“ what is useful ; and pray what use can
“ those old walls be applied to, my dear
“ Olivia ?”—“ Every remnant of anti-
“ quity,” replied Olivia, “ is of sterling
“ value. Though I view it not with the
“ prying veneration or the tender scrupu-
“ losity of a virtuoso, who more frequently

“ values it for its rusty tinge, than for
 “ its real utility; yet the manners, the
 “ customs, the history of our ancestors,
 “ are often more fully elucidated by these
 “ antient remains, than by any written
 “ evidence, or mutilated record. These
 “ remains speak with no partiality; the
 “ are frequently demonstrative proofs of
 “ the prejudices of the historian, and the
 “ predilection of the interested individual.”
 “ —These observations,” returned Sir Ro-
 bert, “ I suppose will be conclusive with
 “ you, my Lady?” — “If they are conclu-
 “ sive,” rejoined my Lady, “ they are not
 “ convincing. There is such a coinci-
 “ dence of opinion between you two, in
 “ matters relating to your antiquated no-
 “ tions, that though I am out-voted, I am
 “ not yet convinced of an error in my
 “ judgement.”

She dropped me a curtsy, Olivia did
 the same, Sir Robert made a respectful
 bow, and they retired.

While

While they were walking from me, I continued fixed to the very identical spot where they left me, without any present inclination to quit it. They had not left me many yards, when, by a sudden involuntary motion, I turned round to look after them. At the same instant Olivia looked back, and perceiving me in such an attitude, she quickly turned away, as conscious of something erroneous in her conduct. Immediately I felt an unusual emotion, proceeding, I conclude, from a conviction of this impertinent curiosity. Impertinent it surely is, and ought to be repressed, from a principle of civility and true politeness. What motive can prompt any person to turn about, and look after another, except to indulge some inquisitory humour, which should be repressed in the first impulse, and not be indulged to the confusion of simplicity, or the embarrassment of innocence.

Having frequently, prior to this incident, condemned myself for it, I now felt the force of my own condemnation influence me with so much vigour, that I walked off instantaneously, covered with the warmest suffusions of shame and disorder.

I am, &c.

L E T.

LETTER VII.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR.
WILTON.

DEAR SIR,

YOU have now minutely informed me of the particulars of an unfortunate affair, which has thrown your family into the utmost distraction. I was partly apprized of the business previously to your information; but as I had only heard detached hints, and obscure insinuations, I suspended my determination on the propriety or impropriety of the conduct of my friend, until I had a complete representation of the case; fully confident, from a long attachment, and unsuspecting friendship, that you would not act from a momentary impulse, or the irregularity of tumultuary passion, in an occurrence of so great importance, to the dishonour of yourself and the derogation of your family.

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Your

Your father was too peremptory, and though unwilling to hear your apology, yet surely, as an obedient son whose conduct had hitherto been irreproachable, he ought not to have attempted to put so severe a restraint upon your inclination, as not to allow you a denial in your choice, even before an interview with the lady. Such a proceeding is harsh, if not reprehensible; and, view it with all the lenity imaginable, sober prudence must condemn it, as the wildest stretch of authority.

O Wilton! a retrospect of past days creates a sweet, yet melancholy pleasure. In those happy days of infancy, what little artless pastimes engaged our attention, what witless projects were concerted for our future happiness! The sun rose to smile upon our pleasures, and set to gild our simple projects. Unwarped with the cares, the solitudes of life, we lived in a continued scene of unruffled delight. Young, healthy, and inconsiderate, time rolled away unheeded and unthought of.

A con-

A constant attendance on the duties of the school, the greatest punishment to many a youthful mind, was rendered not only agreeable, but delightful, from a reciprocal emulation; the fairest passion that can agitate the breast of a rational being. Those diversions which are ever pursued with avidity were pursued by mutual agreement, enjoyed by concert, and concluded by mutual consent. How then did we sigh, and look forward to maturity, when all our little fantastic notions were to be realized; when pleasures were only to be wished for to be enjoyed, when every step to manhood was to exalt us, and terminate in our final aggrandizement, where envy might inveigh, but where care and anxiety should never find an entrance! Vain surmise! and perfectly worthy of those infantine imaginations which gave it birth!

Maturity came—the phantom of happiness vanished. Experience has now taught me, from the suggestions of my own mind, from my commerce with the

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world,

world, that happiness unallayed is not an ingredient in the portion of frail humanity. What a multiplicity of incidents, trivial, futile, and nugatory, is constantly attendant on the actions of man, to thwart his projects, embarrass his pursuits, and embitter his content ! Single, and detached from their subjects, they are contemptible ; but when combined, they are formidable and awful. The susceptibility of some minds receives an unfavourable impression with every aggravating circumstance, that agitates and corrodes the very core of their daily bliss, renders them fretful and uneasy, miserable and wretched under those incidents, which insensibility, or a philosophic turn of thought, would seriously pass over unnoticed, or view with the sneer of ridicule. This has made me really conclude, that the peasant in the cottage enjoys more sincere happiness than all the appendages of opulence can bestow. His labour procures a competence, his temperance ensures health. The day passes
without

without care, he sleeps in peace, and to-morrow brings no anxiety. Happy, thrice happy man ! live thus and enjoy thy little ! Affluence may envy, it cannot deprive thee of those sweets, the produce of industry and sobriety.

These reflections you have partly taught me, by the moral and philosophical turn which pervades your epistles. They are never lost, save on the thoughtless devotee or insensible libertine, who regard every precept repugnant to their indigested opinions, as the tart effusion of an ill-timed prejudice, or the illiberality of an improper bias.

I mentioned in the beginning of this letter, the distraction into which your family was thrown by your sudden and unexpected departure. You may be curious to know how I came to the knowledge of it, as you well know I have for some time been an unwelcome visitant to some part of the family. Not to keep you in suspense, I will tell you how; and the inclosed

from your sister, with mine in answer, will unravel the mystery.

The day after you passed Benfield-House in the Post-coach, when you had scarce time inform me you would, with the utmost integrity and dispatch, acquaint me with the real cause of your departure and place of residence, a servant of your father's came with a letter directed to me. I no sooner saw the superscription, than I knew from whose hand it came—my dear Antonet's ! I had some suspicion of the contents, and that suspicion was verified upon the perusal. Another subject would have been more consonant to my wishes, but I yet hope for a happy conclusion from your friendship.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

BY the express commands of my afflicted parents, I write to you, earnestly entreating you, if you have any knowledge of the subject of our enquiries, that you will answer them without demur or equivocation. My dear brother hath left Wilton Park—yes, left it, without the least intimation, or apprizing any one of his intention. He has now been absent two days, to the inexpressible grief of the whole family; whose diligent searches and anxious enquiries in the neighbourhood have terminated in fruitless despair, and confirmed our first suspicions, that he is gone with a full determination to bid a final adieu to his native country. This unhappy resolution, though pushed immaturely

turely on to it, hath raised our fears, that he hath contracted some improper union, in his long absence, disparaging to his accustomed prudence, and derogatory to the honour of his family. From the early friendship and unceasing attachment which have long dignified you and my brother with the honourable appellation of Friends; from your well-known correspondence during his absence, and many other incidental circumstances, we have conceived some faint hopes, that you may be capable of confirming or dispersing our fears, relative to any previous legal or illegal matrimonial engagement, which may have given him a disgust to his native country, and weaned his affections from his own family.

Under this impression, will you be so ingenuous as to inform me, whether, in the course of your correspondence, he ever made an explicit confession, or dropped a hint of any such connexion? Have you been capacitated, from the perusal

refusal of his confidential letters for these seven years, to draw a conclusion that any such attachment hath had any influence over my brother? An unguarded expression to an inquisitive observer hath often betrayed the internal secrets of the heart. Whether or not you have made any such discovery, do you know the place of his present retreat? Whatever you know of this unhappy circumstance, do not hesitate, but divulge it, to alleviate the distress of a family, rendered already but too wretched.

Some time ago, you were apprized of the union projected by my father between the family of Sir George Silvertop and our's. This was communicated to my brother while abroad; and though in the few letters which he dispatched prior to his arrival, he did not express a tacit acquiescence, neither was his disapprobation so apparent, but that my father conceived the most ardent hopes to bring the comple-
tion

tion of this business to a fortunate issue. The event has proved as I expected; and what you have more than once expressed to me, now brings to my recollection your suggestions of my brother's absolute refusal. I hope you will lay no claim to the pretensions of prophecy, and therefore I conclude your intelligence must have proceeded from himself. From this idea only we conceive some hopes.

The morning my brother left Wilton Park, we were all in the breakfast-parlour, and my father was pressing him to a compliance. My sister Sophy and I, seeing Henry much agitated, suddenly left the room. Returning about a quarter of an hour after, we were not a little amazed to see my Lord and Lady sitting in the profoundest silence, and Henry not present. My dear mamma was in tears, which, upon our entrance, she endeavoured in vain to suppress and conceal. I walked up to her, and kindly enquired the cause of her grief—
she

she fixed her eyes wistfully upon me, and a fresh torrent of tears ran glistening down her venerable cheeks—she attempted to speak, but sobs choked her utterance. Thus overwhelmed with grief, she hurried out of the room. We were commanded to be seated. “Pray, Antonet,” said my father, “where is your brother?”—“Indeed, Sir, I do not know; I have not seen him since I left him here.”—“Sophia,” returned my father, “do you know where Henry is?”—“I do not indeed, Sir,” replied Sophy.—“Ring the bell.”—Upon which my father’s valet entered. “Go to Henry’s chamber, and let him know I desire to speak with him,”—“He is not within, my Lord.”—“Where is he?”—“I do not know—I met him in the passage, seemingly much confused—He opened the front door—I saw him walk with great precipitation over the lawn—he has not since returned.”—“Open the
“front

“ front door, and walk with great precipitation over the lawn!” exclaimed my father with much vehemence, as he arose from his chair, and walked hastily over the floor, visibly in great agitation.

After a solemn pause of some minutes, my father said, “ Thomas!”—“ My Lord.”—“ Did you observe which way he went?”—“ I did.”—“ Then go immediately, and tell Henry upon his duty to return this instant, or he shall forfeit for ever, not only my esteem, but my favour and protection.” Thomas departed—I saw him run across the lawn—I soon lost sight of him. Hope, fear, suspense, alternately took possession of my bosom, and raised such a perturbation, that all the efforts of reason I found too weak and ineffectual to allay the conflict. I looked at my sister Sophy—she arose and came towards me.—She took my hand in her’s, and with an affectionate manner said, “ Sister, you are not well—you look
“ pale

“pale—your hands tremble.”—I replied, “I shall be better presently; let us take a walk in the shrubbery.”—Here we walked for the space of two hours, confessing our hopes and fears, and casting many an anxious look over the lawn, for the return of Thomas, accompanied by our dear brother. At length Thomas appeared, but Henry was not with him.—Fatal presage! We hastened into the room, and waited with the utmost impatience for the entrance of Thomas. Our mamma had returned, and was sitting opposite to my father. She was silent, but sorrow was painted in her countenance; yet it was mild, it was expressive. Thomas entered, and with a look that bespoke his disappointment said, “My Lord, I have sought the whole neighbourhood over with the utmost diligence, and have not been able to gain one syllable of intelligence—not a soul has seen him.”

My father beckoned to Thomas to leave the room; which he had no sooner done,

done, than, addressing himself to my poor
mamma, already overwhelmed with the
deepest sorrow, he said, " This disobedi-
" ence hath torn him for ever from my
" thoughts—every spark of affection,
" which I have hitherto cherished for this
" ungrateful, this worthless boy, I willing-
" ly sacrifice to the coolest indifference and
" neglect. It was my wish, the first wish
" of my soul, to find him a provision
" equal to the dignity of his family,
" and to his pretended merit. He was
" assiduous to contradict me. When I at-
" tempted to compel him to acknowledge
" his duty, he fled; as if any distance
" could screen him from the infamy of in-
" gratitude. You, Madam, always wished
" to have the peculiar tuition of your son,
" insinuating thereby my incapacity for
" the undertaking. To gratify your ca-
" price, I consented, and relaxed of that
" authority over his infant years, which
" would have produced, now when he
" hath arrived to maturity, respect,
" esteem,

“esteem, and duty. Thus it always
 “was, and always will be, where a woman
 “usurps where she ought to obey; when
 “she dictates where she ought to be listen-
 “ing; when she teaches what she never
 “learned.”

The tartness and ill-nature conveyed in the conclusion of this speech, was what my dear mamma by no means deserved. This insult in the midst of her sorrow quite overpowered her, and she fell back in her chair. I ran to her relief—O Benfield! had you seen her, you would have wept—yes, wept over her—her face was as pale as ashes—her hand was cold—her eyes were fixed—now and then a heavy sigh burst from her agitated bosom—at last a convulsive shiver shook her whole frame. Sophia and I, drowned in tears, hung over the venerable mourner; neither knowing what to do, nor what to apply, we could only utter our grief in unavailing complaints. Our falling tears had be-
 dewed

dewed her cold, pale cheek.—Sophia kissed her trembling lips—her breath returned, and a warm torrent of tears which gushed from her eyes, gave a welcome utterance to her lips. She said, “Alas! where am I?”—I replied, “In your own house, my dear mamma, and in your daughters’ arms.”—“God be praised for this kind attendance, and requite the tender affection of my children!”—She arose, and embraced us both. She attempted to walk, supported by us on each side, and by our assistance got to her chamber, where she hath since continued, mourning for her Henry’s loss.

From this description, you may conceive our distress. If your information will alleviate our misery, and administer comfort, I know with what cheerfulness you will communicate it, to the relief of a drooping parent, and the consolation of two sorrowful sisters.

This letter has been perused only by Sophy; your answer will probably undergo

dergo a scrutiny by the jealous eyes of a parent not well affected to you.]

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MISS WILTON.

YOUR affecting and pathetic letter, describing the distress of your noble and worthy family, has given me much concern. I really sympathise in the sorrowful affliction of your dear mamma—dear in every degree, to her lord, to her son, and to her daughters. I am no stranger to the tender affection she always had for Henry; a son worthy of every indulgence, and meriting by his prudent conduct the fondest attention from his parents, and the warmest applauses from all his acquaintance. Confident of his rectitude, and the upright-

uprightness of his intention, I dare venture to assert he will never deviate so far from the paths of honour, as to merit the title of an unworthy son of a worthy family. I am apt to believe he has not taken this step precipitately, but weighed with the maturest deliberation the probability of happiness or misery resulting from the projected union. If happiness were not to be obtained, what compensation could be an equivalent for a willing sacrifice to the pangs of misery. Life is sufficiently chequered with good and evil, joy and sorrow, which are the constant concomitants of all its various stages; and spontaneously to embrace the gloomy side of it, and thus embitter our days with wretchedness, is certainly indefensible.

How far inclination ought to bend to duty, I shall not undertake to determine. Different stages of life afford different views of the subject. The parent concludes he has a right to command; the child,

child, that he has a right to chuse. But if inclination were more consulted, and authority less tyrannical, probably happiness would be more generally diffused, and the baneful effects of sudden separation not so universal, to the scandal of religion, and the infamy of modern manners. The source of every evil should be carefully investigated, in order that its defects may be speedily remedied; for the longer it is suffered to continue, the wider will its progeny be disseminated, to the establishment of error, and the corruption of morality.

This principle may be censured by some, yet, I believe, it will be praised by many; and when the judicious and intelligent praise, the censure of the prejudiced carries no conviction. Yet Custom is a stern tyrant, ruling with despotic sway over the minds and actions of the multitude, who often condemn her proceedings, though they coincide with her precepts. This determination has not even the su-

perfidious plea of plausibility to plead in its behalf; and though its pernicious effects are daily manifested, still it is adopted, in contradiction to the dictates of reason, and the suggestions of humanity. Let age consider, that young people are endowed with reason to chuse, passion to indulge, and resolution to determine; and young people will then admit of knowledge acquired by experience, judgement matured by time, and authority to be the just privilege of age.

How far your brother has deviated from the direct line of his duty, is not apparent from your relation; and what cause may have induced him to decline an union so ardently wished for by his father, is altogether unknown to me. Your suspicions of some other connexion which has attached his inclinations, I conclude in certainty cannot be admitted, otherwise I should have many and just reasons to accuse my friend of duplicity, a vice to which he is not in the least addicted.

Though

Though young, he ever had more fortitude than to sacrifice at the sensual shrine of gratification, and devote those hours to the enjoyment of vicious pleasures, which he knew were to be applied to the attainment of nobler acquisitions.

He never dropped one sentiment in his letters from the Continent, that could give a foundation for such a surmise. His pursuit was knowledge ; his practice, virtue. I know him well, I have long known him. I know the unfeigned affection he always had for his parents, expressed in every page of his correspondence, and written in indelible characters in the recesses of his heart : could they read them there, they would read with pleasure, and glory in the possession of such a son.

You wish me to be ingenuous—I hope you always thought me so, or this insinuation would add greatly to my discontent. I saw your brother, he called upon me after his abrupt departure from Wilton Park. He was in a Post-coach, but

such was my agitation during the few minutes he stopped, that I really forgot to ask whether he was travelling to the north or to the south. He promised to acquaint me, by letter, with the place of his residence; but what time may elapse before such a correspondence takes place, I cannot take upon me to determine.

He seemed, to me, to be much altered; his usual hilarity had forsook him; he was buried in thought, and very absent to my interrogations. This resolution could not have been effected on a mind so sedate, and determined, without violent internal struggles, and deep reflection, the result of a conscious integrity. Such a change I perceived and mentioned. He evaded my question; I repeated it.—He answered with a sigh, he grasped my hand, and retired. I had not resolution, or even the presence of mind, to attend him to the coach—I stood motionless upon the floor, until the hollow

hollow rumbling of the carriage dispelled my reverie, and announced the departure of my dear friend.

This is all I know of a man as dear to me as life itself—the companion of my infancy, and I hope the friend of my riper years.

May Heaven be propitious to my hopes, and restore him to his parents, to his sisters, and to your

W. B.

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L E T.

LETTER X.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

I PERCEIVE by your letter, and the two inclosed, what has passed at Wilton Park since my departure. Believe me, my dear friend, and I think you never had yet cause to dispute my asseveration, my sister's letter has wrung my heart—it has given me more real disquietude than any other incident in the whole course of my life. The night after I perused it, sleep fled my eyes, and my weeping mother was constantly present to my perturbed imagination. I retired to bed, but rest was a stranger to my mind. Restless and uneasy, I got up—I walked over my chamber floor, revolving over and over the distress of a parent venerable

ble for her years, and honoured for the tender affection she ever shewed to her most unfortunate son. Unfortunate and unhappy now indeed! I participate in earnest in all my mother's sorrows, but see it impossible to administer any consolation. Was it not hard to be insulted in the hour of anxiety for her passive behaviour—a behaviour but too affectionate to every branch of her family, and amiable to the eye of every beholder? Alas! thou worthiest of thy sex, forgive, O forgive thy unhappy son; who has, though involuntarily, added to thy grief and solicitude! An opportunity to exculpate myself from the infamous accusation of disobedience and ingratitude, is forbidden me; yet a day may come, and may that day be not far distant, when I shall extricate myself with honour from these aspersions, and be restored to a family, whose dignity and interest it shall be my highest ambition to support unsullied and entire.

The supposition of a connection illegitimate, immoral, and irreligious, I hope you will disprove to my family, and to the world. I am not yet so abandoned or irresolute, but I can distinguish between vice and folly; withstand the one with fortitude, and eye the other with commiseration. Fashion, to be sure, is a prevailing and captivating mistress; her votaries are many and powerful, who pretend her joys are permanent and her pleasures exquisite; but let them be analysed by the cool decisions of unbiassed reason; let them be justly weighed by her warmest devotees, and let themselves draw the conclusion; it will amount to no more, than a constitution ruined by intemperance, a fortune squandered by excess, and a premature old age, with all its concomitant weaknesses and debilities. This case has frequently undergone an examination between us, before the tainting breath of calumny

calumny had dared to sully the unstained reputation of either party, and when happier days were the portion of your exiled friend.

I observe, that, in my mother's distress, the only assistance she received was from my sisters, who, by the description, were scarcely able to assist and console her, much less to alleviate her sorrow. Where was my father? I am afraid—but he is my parent, and though he may have erred, it is not my duty, as his son, to condemn him. I wish my dear mother would accept of my apology for his seeming obduracy.

You have acknowledged you saw me, but knew nothing further relative to me. If you think it expedient, you may communicate the place of my retreat to my sister, with your earnest solicitations not to acquaint my father. This intelligence may probably restore some little tranquility to the mind of my honoured parent, to

whose welfare and happiness I would willingly sacrifice my own. The propriety of concealment from my father is self-evident. He certainly is not inflexible. Let my mother watch the happy moment of parental affection returning with double force after lying dormant for a certain space, and I shall upon my bended knees implore his forgiveness, and give him a solemn promise, never to marry any lady without his entire approbation; only let him remit his intention of compelling my obedience in this inauspicious occurrence.

How often is the peace of a family embittered and broken, how often is one branch of it alienated from another, by the mere force of opinion! Let us be as strenuous as we please in maintaining what we suppose to be right; but let us not attempt to enforce our decisions against the judgement of those who have an equal right to think for themselves. It is utterly impossible that unanimity should exist

exist in the free discussion of any principle; especially where Authority wishes to assume a power, and to exert it; which cannot be granted, without foregoing the privileges of humanity, common sense, and reason. Age may dictate, sometimes enforce, but youth will obey reluctantly.

Once for all, accept of my apology for these digressions; they naturally result from the reflections of a mind oppressed with the deepest melancholy, and struggling under the horror originating from the imprecation of an incensed father. O Benfield! what could incense my parent to such a degree of violence! what aggravation—I feel I shall be carried away with a vain expostulation, and therefore will return from a subject at once grating and afflictive.

The morning after my last visit to the old castle, I took a second walk into the park. I found something congenial to my present disposition in exploring those shat-

tered ruins. They even seem to soothe my melancholy, and extenuate the heavy gloom that presses upon my mind. As I was walking among the ponderous wrecks that lay scattered within the inner area, the surface of the ground suddenly gave way beneath me, and I sunk up to the waist in a dry sandy soil. This sudden and unexpected incident at first much alarmed me; but, finding I sunk no deeper, I immediately began to extricate myself from a situation in no wise very eligible. In the very interim, Sir Robert Bertram, his Lady, and Olivia, having taken their usual morning walk, came to the place, and espied me in the situation already described. The ladies screamed, while Sir Robert ran to my assistance. By his help, I was soon enabled to free myself from my temporary bondage. When got out, I saw something lying among the dust that attracted my curiosity. I took it up, examined it, and found it to be a human bone.—“Pray,
“Sir,”

“ Sir,” said Olivia, “ what is that upon
“ which you fix your attention ?”—I repli-
ed, “ It is a relique of antiquity.”—She
came nearer, with an intention to examine
it—but turned pale, and shuddered at the
sight. Lady Bertram observing her, said,
“ Olivia, what is the matter with you ?”
She replied, “ Look there.”—Lady Bertram,
seeing a human skull in my hand, shrieked,
and threw herself into the arms of Sir
Robert. “ Be not terrified, dear ladies,”
said Sir Robert ; “ here is nothing to strike
“ you with horror, nothing to create dis-
“ gust. Perhaps (taking the skull in his
“ hand) this is the poor remains of one
“ of my ancestors, famous in his time as
“ a hero, a statesman, or a man of letters ;
“ or, probably, it may be the relique of a
“ woman celebrated once as the beauty
“ of her day. In these dark, hollow, so-
“ litary holes, may have glittered eyes
“ no ways, ladies, inferior to your’s. Here
“ may have pouted lips on which the
“ proudest

“proudest beau might have gloried to
“impress a kiss. On this cheek the rose
“and the lily may have been naturally
“so blended, as to glow with the rap-
“turous tinge of real beauty. Poor, last
“remains of mortality, I consign thee
“again to thy place of rest (throwing it
“amongst the dust)! Mayest thou liethere
“undisturbed with thy kindred ashes, and
“no unhallowed foot henceforth disturb
“thee! Long hast thou slept in peace, and
“by the memorial which I shall erect,
“long shalt thou henceforth sleep.”

This apostrophe being ended, upon examination, we perceived by the other parts of human skeletons mingled with the soil, that it was an ancient cemetery in which I had sunk down, without any covering except some withering branches of the solitary willow.

Sir Robert said, he would lay a free-stone slab over the top of it, with an inscription purporting what it contained.

“And

“ And now, ladies,” said he, “ what do
“ you think of the entertainment this
“ morning’s walk and this gentleman
“ have afforded you ? ” — “ Indeed, Sir,”
replied his lady, “ the walk, as usual, was
“ agreeable, but your lecture was too fe-
“ rious. ” — “ What, Olivia, is your opi-
“ nion ? ” said Sir Robert. — “ I always re-
“ gard, Sir, a warning of this nature as a
“ *memento* of my mortality. As nothing
“ is more certain, than that one day we
“ shall all mingle with our native dust, it
“ is absolutely requisite that we should
“ sometimes reflect upon this solemn
“ scene, as preparatory to our final depar-
“ ture ; lest when the king of terrors ap-
“ proaches, we should meet his stroke
“ with cowardice, and leave this transitory
“ scene of woe with a vain wish, that we
“ might be indulged with a few more
“ years to reflect, amend, and repent. ” —
“ Come, come, Sir Robert,” said his
lady, “ come away ; if you listen any
“ longer,

"longer, you will have an harangue as
"long as the vicar's sermon."—"Go, you
"inconfidrate," replied he, "a sermon
"can never be too long; it is only want
"of attention that makes it tedious."
With that he moved his hat, and retired;
while I gazed after the fair preacher,
vainly wishing that she had moralized
longer.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

AFTER my return home, I began to draw a parallel between Olivia and Miss Silvertop, to the no small advantage of the former. Olivia, from the shortness of the time, and the few opportunities I had had to make my observations, seemed to be serious, contemplative, and intelligent; Miss Silvertop, to be giddy, inconsiderate, and uninformed. Olivia was serious, even on the most trifling subject; and, by a careful examination, attempted to draw some improvement from it. She was contemplative without fullness, employing her thoughts in the investigation of objects which occurred to her memory upon recollection, or what she collected from the immediate recital of others. She
was

was intelligent, as the sure consequence of the two preceding causes. Miss Silvertop was giddy, from an implicit reliance on the constant direction of her mother, which utterly prevented her from the exercise of her own will, and rendered her always undetermined on the choice or selection of her pursuits. She was inconsiderate, from an inaction or indolent turn of mind, the baleful influence of a contracted education, which never prompted her to an exercise of those faculties with which nature had endowed her. Her being uninformed is not to be wondered at, when we reflect upon the impropriety of such a conduct in a parent, who has visibly bestowed all her attention in embellishing the exterior of a child, whose capabilities of improvement in the useful scenes of life can never by these means be known by the most acute discrimination.

This parallel, you will probably say, is drawn with the pen of partiality; that I have,

have, through discontent, exaggerated the defects of the one, and heightened the acquisitions of the other. This censure would be of no force, if you knew the parties.

While I was thus ruminating on this subject with some degree of pleasure, a card was brought me from Sir Robert Bertram, containing an invitation to dinner. I perused it with more cheerfulness than I had been accustomed to for some time, and returned an immediate verbal answer, that I would do myself the honour to wait upon him. The messenger had not been gone many minutes, before I found myself in a dilemma, from which I was utterly at a loss how to extricate myself. My wardrobe, you must know, was wholly upon my back; and though not destitute of money, in the present instance it was of no avail, as it was not possible to make any new addition to my present apparel, before the hour of appointment would

would expire. I began to examine my present equipment with some attention; but how was I mortified to perceive, what I had not before observed, that the lower parts of my dress were not only sullied, but actually spoiled, by my unexpected descent this morning. This observation determined me to send an apology for non-attendance, and politely beg an excuse of Sir Robert for contradicting my own message without particularizing the motive of so sudden a change. Upon this I rung the bell with some violence, when my ready hostess immediately appeared. I asked her, if she had any person at hand who would carry a card to Bertram-Hall, as I had received an invitation to dinner, and had unthinkingly accepted of it, without adverting to the inconvenience of my portmanteau not being yet arrived, or even considering the effects of an accident which had unluckily befallen me this morning, by which a part of the apparel which

which I was wearing was rendered totally useless. "Indeed, Sir," said she, "if I may presume to——" and here she stopped. I saw she was much fluttered, and wished to relieve her, by observing, that if she had any thing to offer, I begged she would speak with freedom, without the least dread of giving any offence. She went on—"Indeed, Sir, if that be the only obstacle, may I presume to remove it, by acquainting you, that I can accommodate you with apparel to supply the place of what you have spoiled this morning, and you are very welcome to them until your own arrive." I felt the offer of my good hostess operate with all the force of friendship; I cordially thanked her for her kindness, telling her, since she was so ready to tender, I was equally willing to accept of the obligation.

She retired, and after the absence of a few minutes returned smiling, as though she was pleased with my acceptance of what
she

she had offered. She exhibited what she had brought with a good deal of officiousness, "humbly hoping," she said, "I would use them as my own."—She then dropped a low curtsy, and left the room.

"Thanks, good woman," said I, just as she left me, "thanks to the goodness of thy heart! Thou wishest to accommodate me in these trifles—it is really kind—but thou canst not ease the torture of a heart racked and oppressed beneath the heavy weight of a father's displeasure."

Was it a hardship, Benfield, or only an inconvenience, I suffered in this instance of temporary want? I think it was only an inconvenience. A wise man should seldom complain, even when he labours under the pressure of real evils; for complaints may irritate, but will never alleviate the incumbent weight of woe.

I was soon equipped, and, having but a little way to walk, was soon at Bertram-Hall. I was welcomed by Sir Robert,
and

and introduced to another gentleman, a Mr. Fennell, whom I had never seen before. He received my compliments with a visible coldness, and eyed me with a most minute circumspection. The oddness of this behaviour made me somewhat considerative, as I was not conscious of any present impropriety of conduct. Lady Bertram perceived my confusion, and obligingly wished to dispel it, by observing, that she hoped I had suffered no harm or inconvenience from the ludicrous incident that had happened to me in the morning; "for I must confess," continued she, "it has afforded me a hearty laugh, "to think how you were surrounded by "the dust and bones of our old ancestors, "while Sir Robert and Olivia looked at "me with all the demureness and gravity "of two *religieux*, reprehending my "mirth as ill-timed and indiscriminate. "For you must know, Sir, that if Olivia "were not already in the high road of
"matri-

“matrimony with Mr. Fennell here, I
 “should really conclude she had fallen in
 “love with you. Nay, Olivia, why do
 “you blush so? Did I not tell you, I
 “would acquaint Mr. Wilton with all
 “your praises of him?”—This raillery of
 Lady Bertram had crimsoned the lovely
 face of Olivia all over, and added much
 to her natural beauty. I perceived her to
 be disconcerted; and the more I viewed her,
 the more I felt my own inability to relieve
 her, by feeling myself in the same embar-
 rassed predicament. After a pause of some
 seconds, Sir Robert relieved our anxiety
 by saying, that though Mr. Fennell was
 an admirer of Olivia, and had offered
 very honourable and advantageous pro-
 posals, yet Lady Bertram had no autho-
 rity to say she was in the high road to
 matrimony, as there was some previous
 and very important business to be deter-
 mined, before such a match could be
 concluded. All this time, Mr. Fennell
 sat

sat with the one leg carelessly thrown over the other, and biting his nails for want of other employment. However, from the observations which were made by Sir Robert, he broke silence, and said, that what business of importance Olivia had to determine, he could not understand, but the further his inquiries went, the greater the mystery appeared to him; yet he thought Olivia competent to decide for herself. This was to me altogether unintelligible; and though it excited my curiosity, where was I to seek for a gratification of it?

Nothing further of any consequence passed during the afternoon, except that I caught the eye of Olivia sometimes fixed upon me; and when she perceived I observed it, she turned away with some confusion, which I flattered myself was not artificial. I confess to you, ingenuously, I felt a pleasure whenever I caught her eye thus employed, and the faint tinge of crimson

VOL. I.

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which,

which, in the interim, glowed upon her cheek, conveyed to my soul a rapture I have hitherto felt inexpressible. We parted in the evening, all agreeably entertained with one another, except Mr. Fennell, who seemed to taste no joy from the hospitality of Sir Robert, the cheerful mirth of his lady, or the silent but attractive beauties of his mistress.

I am, &c.

LET.

LETTER XII.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON.
MR. WILTON.

SIR,

THE parallel with which your last epistle began, was certainly delineated by the favourable impulse of prepossession; probably not so apparent to you, as a party interested, yet very obvious to an unprejudiced individual. From my personal knowledge of Miss Silvertop, you have not exaggerated her defects; defects early imbibed from the mistaken predilection of an over-fond parent, who with the utmost solicitude instilled opinions into the tender mind of her daughter that may never be eradicated. The predominating desire of finery is very soon manifested in the youthful breast; and when this desire is seconded and encouraged by the over-weening fondness of

a parent, it becomes, in process of time, a habit so firmly established, that it frequently continues the ruling passion to the latest period of life. To check this passion in the youthful mind, all cautionary precepts and prudential admonitions are found ineffectual: advice may be given, but it is ever given in vain, especially when it comes from the same person who was formerly more assiduous to inculcate, than she is now to condemn. When the embellishment and adorning of the person require so much attention, the fatal consequence is inevitable;—ignorance, in the supreme degree, in every thing relative to life, especially prudence in external conduct, and œconomy in the regulation of affairs; politeness degenerates into ceremony, and good-breeding into downright frippery. It is not every parent who is the most capable of educating his own children. The partiality of a father has often spoiled a hopeful son; and the fondness of a mother, the amiability of a daughter.

Mifs

Miss Olivia seems to be a new favourite: possibly from her accomplishments she may deserve it. Novelty has a charm that is very captivating, and we frequently wish to cherish it, without giving ourselves the trouble of examining whether the object is meritorious or not. This, you will perceive, is a general indiscriminate observation, without the application of personality. The young lady may be, and I hope is, among the most amiable of her sex. The specimens you have occasionally favoured me with of her conduct and intelligence, have operated with me already mightily in her favour. If I had not to apply the remaining part of this letter on business that is of importance to you, I think I could discover a secret to you, which in future may be deemed of some consequence.

A few days after I had dispatched my answer to your sister's letter, I was honoured with a very extraordinary visit; extra-

ordinary as it was unexpected. Walking on the terrace, and perusing one of your epistles, I saw a carriage coming towards me; and as it drew nearer, I perceived to whom it belonged. Rather agitated at the sight, I withdrew into my study; if possible, to compose myself before its arrival. It arrived—I heard it stop—and a message was brought to me, that Lady Wilton wished to speak to me. I went to the carriage door—there sat the venerable old lady and her two amiable daughters. As soon as she saw me, she changed colour—her eyes met mine; they were suffused with the genial tribute of nature—she then said, with a faltering tone, “O, Mr. Benfield, where is my son Henry!” She seemed to wish to say more, but her feelings overcame her. I desired her Ladyship to favour me with her company into the parlour, when I would willingly give her all the information I could, on a subject so afflicting. She kindly accepted my offer, and I hoped the young ladies might be admitted

mitted of the party ; which being granted, we walked in.

As soon as we were seated, your affectionate mother said, “ Mr. Benfield, without any ceremony, inform me where my son is. Is he well, and do you suppose he means to return to Wilton Park ? ” I replied, “ My honoured lady, I am at full liberty to acquaint you with your son’s retreat, but under positive injunctions to conceal it from his father at present ; therefore, I hope you will not exact a breach of a sacred promise to my absent friend. ”—She answered, “ You may make any reservation of that kind you please ; I should be loth to require a breach of promise, especially when made to my dear son. ” She hesitated—then sighed, and looked at your sister Antonet, as if she wished her to give me some assurance. But your sister remaining silent, she continued, “ I promise you, Sir, upon my honour, I will not acquaint Lord Wilton with any particular which

“either you or my dear son wish to
 “have concealed.” She looked at her
 “daughters—who both gave me the same
 honourable pledge. In this confidence I
 informed them, that you were settled in a
 village called Milford Grange, upon the
 Banks of the Wansbeck, in the county of
 Northumberland. “In the county of
 “Northumberland!” exclaimed your mo-
 ther; “what, so far north! Is he in
 “health?” I assured her you were; as the
 letters I had received, hinted not at the
 least indisposition. She returned, “I am
 “somewhat more at ease, now I know where
 “my dear child is. He is likewise in health!
 “and may the God of his fathers ever
 “bless and protect him!” Here she cast
 her eyes upwards, with a rapture which
 bespoke the fervour of her pious soul. After
 a short pause, she addressed me again:
 “Pray, Mr. Benfield, has Henry informed
 “you that he feels the want of any neces-
 “sary or convenience of life in his retire-
 “ment, as he left all his clothes at Wilton
 “Park?”

“Park?” I then related to her, nearly in your own words, the ludicrous incident by which a part of your apparel was spoiled, and how you were accommodated before you could wait upon Sir Robert Bertram. She was affected—Antonet looked grave—but Sophy relaxed into a gentle simper. Her mother, observing it, said, “Pray, child, do you laugh at your brother’s misfortune?”—“No, indeed, Madam,” replied Sophy; “I love my brother, and that my brother knows; I only smiled at the idea of my brother standing all bedaubed with dust and dirt in the company of Sir Robert Bertram, his Lady, and Olivia, and yet never perceived it until he received an invitation to dinner. This made me smile, Madam; and, Mr. Benfield, O do not acquaint my brother that I laughed at his misfortunes; and, sister, you know”—Here the affectionate girl fell a-weeping—when Lady Wilton walked towards her, and desired her to compose herself, as she did not mean to

reproach her with any levity in this instance, or with want of affection towards her unhappy Henry. She continued, "Antonet, you will acquaint Mr. Benfield with the principal occurrences which have happened since Henry's departure, that he again may inform your brother what confusion his retreat has occasioned."

In obedience to her mother's commands, Antonet began: "You must know, Mr. Benfield, as soon as my father was convinced that my brother was actually gone from Wilton Park, he retired to his chamber, shut himself up, and peremptorily commanded none, on pain of his displeasure, to molest him; as he deemed all business, of whatever nature, impertinent, and beneath his care."

"Inflexible to all solicitation, he continued estranged from his family for some days. Silence and despondency sat visible on the face of every one. We were all mourners, without one friendly voice
"to

“to administer consolation, to alleviate
 “that sorrow, which spread a heavy
 “gloom where cheerfulness and hilarity
 “were accustomed to reign with unabated
 “sway. In this perplexity, Sir George
 “Silvertop arrived, and expressed an ear-
 “nest desire to see my father, who on be-
 “ing informed of Sir George’s arrival,
 “and concluding that some important
 “occurrence must have stimulated him to
 “this unexpected visit, came down into
 “the parlour. As soon as he was seated,
 “Sir George, with his usual frankness, a
 “quality characteristic of him, addressed
 “my father in these words:—“My Lord,
 “I am extremely sorry for the unfortunate
 “incident which has separated the hope of
 “your house from the rest of your family;
 “especially as this unhappy case solely
 “arises from the proposed union which you
 “and I deemed requisite to establish, not
 “only the peace and welfare of the parties
 “more immediately connected, but also
 “of the families to which they belonged.

“ We are disappointed. Compulsory me-
 “ thods are seldom effective; for where
 “ marriage is contracted, and the inclina-
 “ tion not consulted, strife is generated,
 “ and unanimity destroyed. Is it not un-
 “ natural for parents to couple two young
 “ persons together in the sacred band of
 “ matrimony, and for life too, whether
 “ they have, or suppose they ever can
 “ have, a real, or even any affection for
 “ each other? This is a doctrine, you
 “ know, my Lord, I always disapproved;
 “ and though by it you have lost your son,
 “ he may one day be restored to you, to
 “ your favour, and to a happy family. I
 “ deem it not an insult to myself that my
 “ daughter is slighted; though some
 “ others do; for Lady Silvertop, chagrined
 “ at her daughter being thus refused, has
 “ again encouraged the addresses of ano-
 “ ther gentleman, which were only dis-
 “ continued after I received your honour-
 “ able proposals. There seems to be a fa-
 “ tality in many things; and what we can-
 “ not

“not accomplish, my Lord, with satisfac-
 “tion to ourselves and happiness to others,
 “let us bear the disappointment with un-
 “shaken fortitude and christian patience,
 “and leave the disposal of it to an Omnis-
 “cient Power, who will order, by ways
 “inscrutable to us, all things for the
 “best.”

“Here Sir George ceased. My fa-
 “ther listened with impatience to a doc-
 “trine not in the least congenial to his
 “own, and said, with a sneer, “How
 “long have you, Sir George, been pupil
 “to my son? That latitude of obedience
 “which you would allow, would ruin all
 “the noble families in Britain, not only
 “from a connivance at, but an encourage-
 “ment to illicit connexions, and dispa-
 “raging mixtures, by which the purest
 “blood of the best families would be con-
 “taminated and degraded. However you
 “may think and act, Sir George, I shall
 “always insist upon an implicit obedience
 “to my commands in matrimonial mat-
 “ters;

“ters; it is my duty to chuse, my children’s
 “to comply; and here I solemnly aver to
 “you, except my son marries your daugh-
 “ter, in pursuance to my wish, he not
 “only incurs my eternal displeasure, but
 “shall ever live under the unrepealed im-
 “precation of an incensed father.”

“Sir George replied, “I mean not,
 “my Lord, to controvert your opinion;
 “you may enjoy it, for me, uncontrouled;
 “but this I can assure you of, I would not
 “force the inclinations of my daughter,
 “to seat her upon a throne.”—“Folly,”
 returned my Lord, “downright folly,
 “Sir George! I wonder to hear a man of
 “your experience in life talk so inconfi-
 “derately. What is life without distinc-
 “tion—what is it without enjoyment?
 “How can you be distinguished without
 “opulence? or how can you enjoy the
 “pleasures of life without honourable con-
 “nexions? And must all this be sacrificed
 “to inclination? Away with such foolery,
 “Sir:

“ Sir George. Know the world, and then
“ you will know how to use it.”

“ All this time, my father was walking
“ over the floor with a very quick pace.
“ Sir George seemed not a little discon-
“ certed at his violence, and modestly said,
“ I believe, my Lord, I could easily con-
“ fute your opinions, both from the wisest
“ of the ancients and the most learned of
“ the moderns.”—“ Ancients and mo-
“ derns !” replied my father, with more
“ vehemence than ever, “ what have they
“ to do with the direction of my family ?”
“ Sir George was silent—confusion was in
“ his looks--which my dear mother per-
“ ceiving, said to him, “ And pray, Sir
“ George, may I make free to ask, who the
“ gentleman is you lately mentioned, to
“ have renewed his addresses to Miss Silver-
“ top ?”—“ He is a Capt. Thornton,” re-
plied Sir George, “ a favourite of Lady
“ Silvertop, and seemingly no way dis-
“ agreeable to my daughter.”

“ After

“ After some more uninteresting conversation, Sir George took his leave ; my father likewise withdrew, and the next morning, without acquainting one individual of the family with his intention, fet off for London. During his absence, we have taken the favourable opportunity to wait upon you, Mr. Benfield, to learn what hath befallen our unfortunate brother.”

The lovely Antonet ceased ; when your mother said, “ She has given a true recital, and you are at full liberty to make what use you please of it, in your future correspondence with my dear child : and let me conjure you, Mr. Benfield, by the prayers of an afflicted mother, to let me know, from time to time, the particulars of his wretched case. The happy hour may come, but oh ! I am afraid it is at a great distance, which may restore him to my arms, to be a comfort to my old age, and an honour to my grey hairs.” She sighed

sighed deeply as she spoke the last words—she wished to conceal her sorrow—her wish was vain—it was but too visibly depicted on her countenance. Amiable woman! with some difficulty she gave me the following charge: “Will you be so
“obliging as to accommodate my Henry,
“and your friend, with what may be requisite for him to support himself with
“ease and respectability during his unhappy exile; and whatever obligation of
“this kind you lay me under, I will repay,
“and with unfeigned thankfulness?” I replied, “My Lady, you have conferred
“a task upon me, which I shall perform
“with pleasure to my friend; but I have
“long wished to style him by a more tender name.”—Here I walked towards my charming girl, and gently took her by the hand.—She blushed, and gave me such a look of tenderness, as thrilled through my very soul. My Lady said, “Mr. Benfield,
“you know the obstacle—my Lord—but
“live in hope.” Here they arose—I conducted

ducted them to the chariot—I followed it with my eyes as it drove away, and conveyed from me the only object on whom my temporal happiness depends. This is no new subject to you, and therefore I shall not trouble you with my complaints.

You will remember to make use of the power consigned to me by your mother; you know it was unnecessary, nevertheless it shews her affection.

I am, &c.

LET

LETTER XIII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR.
BENFIELD.

SIR,

THE recital of many incidents which your last contains, has really affected me. I see the unfeigned love of my dear mother, the affection of my sisters, and the rigorous inflexibility of my father. What motive could have prompted the latter to take this journey to London? It bears an unfavourable aspect; may my ominous fears be in vain! The candour and ingenuousness of Sir George Silvertop I admire and revere, not only from a congeniality of sentiment, but because they are natural, they are rational. His character, I perceive, improves upon me, by a minute acquaintance; it expands from an unfortunate exigence, and glows by collision. In this

this instance, he has acted with all the greatness of the Christian, and the Philosopher. He wished to console; he wished in vain. He spoke with wisdom; he spoke in vain. Amiable man!

Acquaint my sweet little Sophy, that she has not offended me. I know and have experienced the tenderness of her heart. Tell her, I have laughed myself more than once, on the bare recollection of the circumstance. My appearance was ludicrous enough, and when pourtrayed in her fertile imagination, might easily raise a smile.

I shall now proceed with my own important adventures. Being informed there was great plenty of trout in the River Wanbeck, I procured a rod, and went on angling. Though never very dextrous at the diversion, I had some pastime. But being soon tired, I sat down upon the green margin to enjoy a more solid pleasure, from the perusal of a new edition of Horace by the learned

learned Jani. Attentive to my reading, I perceived nothing around me, until I was started suddenly by the fall of something across my legs, where I was sitting. I looked up, and saw it was my own fishing-rod, which a pretty little boy had taken up to examine, and by chance had let it fall. The length of the grass and my own attention prevented me from hearing him until he was in my presence. He seemed to be about four years of age, of a fair complexion, tinged with a little red upon his cheeks. His eyes were large and full, of a light blue colour, which shed a lustre, at once pleasing and captivating. His countenance was open and placid, and shaded with a quantity of flaxen hair, which waved carelessly over his shoulders. He was dressed in a suit of green, and held a bunch of cowslips in his hand. Being struck with the appearance of this little cherub, I said to him, "My dear little boy, what are you doing here alone?" He answered, with a mildness that really charmed

charmed me, "I am gathering cowslips
" for my mamma,"—"And what does your
" mamma do with them?"—"She puts
" them among water in the flower-pots,
" and sets them in the parlour."—"And
" what do they call your mamma?"—
" They call her Mrs. Brooke."—"And
" where does she live?"—"She lives at
" home."—The infantine simplicity of
this answer pleased me wonderfully; when
taking the little wanderer by the hand,
and seating him by me, I asked him, if his
mamma was not afraid to let him come
and gather cowslips by himself? "Yes,"
says he, "mamma would be afraid, if she
" knew I was by myself; but Miss Livy
" was with me when I came from home.
" She stopped to speak to Lady Bertram,
" and I came to gather cowslips."—
"Will you take me homewith you to your
" mamma?"—"Yes," said he, "if Miss
" Livy does not come, you shall go and
" see mamma and papa too." After a
good deal more of this innocent prattle,
continued

continued on purpose to prolong the time, I saw nothing of Miss Livy, as my little stranger called her, when I arose and requested him to lead me to his papa. He cheerfully took me by the hand, and said, "Come then, we must go this way." We had not walked far, before he exclaimed with much exultation, "Yonder's Miss Livy!" and off he ran to meet her, as fast as his little legs would carry him. She snatched him up in her arms, and kissing him, said, "You little rogue, where have you been? I have been seeking you this half hour."—"I have," replies he, "been gathering cowslips with yon gentleman, and now he is going to my mamma and papa, and you must go too." Being come up to Olivia, and accosting her with the pleasure I had received from my conversation with her little companion, I desired to know to whom he belonged. Olivia replied, "He is the son of the Rev. Mr. Brooke, the vicar of the parish, one of the worthiest of his
"worthy

“worthy tribe, whose house stands continuous to Sir Robert’s.” She had scarce concluded, when our little prattler said, “Miss Livy, why don’t you put your arm through the gentleman’s when you are walking, the same way you do with my papa, and with Sir Robert?” I could not help smiling at the archness of the observation, while Olivia seemed in the utmost confusion, and at a loss what reply to make him. He repeated his request, when she replied to him, “My dear child, don’t you know that your papa and Sir Robert are my old acquaintances, and married gentlemen? but this gentleman is a stranger, and therefore to do what you bid me would be quite improper.” We were by this time come to the path-way which leads to the vicarage, when Olivia wished me a good morning, and was retiring; but my little innocent, seizing her hand, said, “No, Miss Livy, you shall not go home, until you go with this gentleman to my papa. You say he is a stranger; he
“ will

“ will not know how to open the gate, you
“ know—I cannot open it—come, go and
“ open it for us.” I took this opportunity,
and, addressing myself to Olivia, said, “ If
“ it be not inconvenient, Madam, I shall
“ esteem it as a particular favour if you
“ will introduce me to Mr. Brooke ; I am
“ no stranger to his general character as
“ a clergyman, and as a scholar. I wish
“ to be acquainted with him ; he will be
“ a rational and intelligent companion. I
“ wish for his advice in more cases than
“ one.” As I pronounced these last words,
I fixed, by a sudden and involuntary motion,
my eyes upon those of Olivia. A
lovely blush overspread her face—she cast
her eyes upon the ground, and, taking little
Brooke by the hand, she walked towards the gate. A silence ensued, and the
little wag, observing Olivia in some confusion,
said, “ Miss Livy, why do you
“ blush ? you have not told a lie.”—“ My
“ dear,” said I, “ do people blush when
“ they tell lies ?”—“ Yes ; mamma says
VOL. I. H “ she

“ she knows when I tell a lie by my blushing; but I am sure Miss Livy has not told a lie.” This observation increased, instead of alleviating, her embarrassment—I was going to change the subject—She opened the gate, and we walked in. Off I scoured the little scamperer, as fast as his legs could run, calling, “ Mamma! papa! here is a gentleman along with Miss Livy.” The parlour door was open, and we entered. Olivia said, “ Mr. Brooke, here is a gentleman, who is a perfect stranger in the neighbourhood, whom I beg leave to introduce to you.” He answered, “ My dear Olivia, the gentleman is doubly welcome from such an introduction to my humble roof.”

After I was seated (for Olivia took her leave immediately) I related to Mr. and Mrs. Brooke, how I met with their son gathering cowslips in a meadow, by the water-side. They chid him gently for wandering so far from home, and he promised to do so no more.

From

From a little conversation, I observed Mr. Brooke to be a man far above ceremony. There is an openness in his behaviour which is engaging; there is an ingenuousness in his manner, which captivates and wins you. His communicativeness was agreeable, and I perceived his intelligence was extensive. By using a little artifice in proposing my interrogatories, I was soon convinced of his erudition. Whether or no he perceived my intension, I know not. He seemed not to do so, for he answered without the least hesitation, and with the utmost freedom, such questions as many would have deemed in a stranger presumptuous and impertinent. Having received a general invitation, I shall with all the pleasure imaginable cultivate a lasting friendship with this worthy man.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

AS soon as I had left the worthy Mr. Brooke, I retired to my chamber, with an intention to amuse and instruct myself, by a perusal of my favourite bard, the courtly Horace. I attempted to read, but soon found the attempt was in vain. My thoughts were employed upon another subject, and all my endeavours to collect and fix them upon some favourite ode, were totally fruitless. Olivia, the charming Olivia, was ever present in my mind; I thought I saw her continually before my eyes; and whenever I attempted to recollect another object, in order to divert, if possible, a passion, which I perceived but too visibly had taken root imperceptibly, I found all my thoughts recur, by an
internal

internal impulse, to their original cause, the beautiful Olivia.

Distracted, yet charmed with the idea of being captivated thus unawares, without thinking of the consequences, in a fury I threw poor Horace from me—rose hastily from my seat, and in the utmost confusion walked several times across the floor. A thousand chimerical procedures crowded into my imagination—an imagination heated and tormented with the most violent, yet the most pleasing passion of the human mind. One moment I determined to go and discover myself to Olivia, and make an immediate declaration of my flame; the next, I thought of doing it by letter. These were instantly superseded by an application to the good Mr. Brooke, who probably might be persuaded to become an intercessor for me. These, and many more resolutions, too tedious to enumerate, and which I was not in a capacity to examine, created such a distraction in my brain, that, in

a state nearly bordering upon the frantic, I threw myself with violence into an arm-chair which stood in a corner of my room. In this paroxysm of absolute stupefaction I remained for some time. Beginning to recover, I observed the objects in the room more distinctly—my perceptions were not so irregular—my scattered senses not in such disorder—I sighed heavily—an involuntary flood of tears gave my mind immediate ease. I then burst out into the following soliloquy : “ O Wilton ! thou
“ art born to be unhappy ! Born the heir of
“ an ancient and honourable family ; edu-
“ cated with care, and nurtured with paren-
“ tal tenderness ; by an act of disobedience,
“ thou hast plunged a happy family into
“ distress, and thyself into misery and
“ wretchedness. What reparation canst
“ thou make to thy family ! what happiness
“ canst thou promise to thyself ! Thou art
“ here, alienated from thy family, separated
“ from thy friends, and labouring under a
“ paternal malediction, almost an outcast of
“ society.

" society. Thou hast abruptly left thy fami-
 " ly, to escape an authoritative marriage;
 " thou art here ensnared with the bewitching
 " shackles of love! captivated with a stran-
 " ger, whom probably thy family would
 " scorn to own—Gracious Heaven! what
 " consolation is there for a wretch like me,
 " struggling under the terrors of a wilful
 " disobedience, and the terrific awe of a fa-
 " ther's curse!"—Here I ceased, and after
 a considerable pause, said, " This consola-
 " tion still remains: I acted from a thorough
 " conviction of doing right; if I am wrong,
 " it is an error, not spontaneously committed;
 " and I hope that Power whose providence
 " constantly superintends the actions of all
 " below, will forgive and pardon it."

Having concluded, I continued in an in-
 determinate reverie for some minutes, this
 being dissipated by the ~~retaining~~ powers
 of reason, I arose, left my room, and walk-
 ed into the fields. A gentle shower of
 rain had fallen—the lucid drops hung glit-
 tering from every pile of grass—the pretty

wild flowers, which were scattered profusely amongst my feet, were again expanding their unnoticed beauties to the enlivening rays of the sun—the little woodland songsters were trilling forth their melody from every spray, as thankful for the genial tribute which the earth had received. I often stopped—I listened with pleasure—the scene around me was cheerful, refreshing, and gay—the wildness of the music was attractive, and served to soothe my present melancholy. I could not help exclaiming, “Happy warblers! your enjoyments are real, your pleasures are tranquil and unalloyed!—This song of thankfulness for the care of Omniscience is a warning, a lesson to rational beings.—Happy inhabitants of the fields, yet probably unconscious of your happiness! how many of the sons of men, endowed with all the magnificence which grandeur can bestow, might envy your scenes of joy and tranquillity!”

While I poured out these exclamations, I carelessly rested against the bole of a sycamore,

camore, and was just in the action of moving from it, when I was saluted with a note, that at once charmed, delighted, and riveted my feet to the spot. I looked round about me, and espied at a few yards distance, perched on the top of a lofty ash, my sweet musician. His coat was of a shining jetty black, his bill of the brightest yellow—his notes rapturous and enchanting. I was in a mood to listen—I listened with a pleasure which is beyond description. The woods which hung upon the shelving banks of the Wansbeck re-echoed to his song. On a sudden he dropped from his slender twig—I eyed him with eagerness, and marked his place of rest.—I approached the place, but was sorry to have disturbed the sweet little songster, and the dear partner of his cares:—she was nestling, with her wings spread abroad—they flew off affrighted.—I examined the structure of the nest with admiration.—I observed the domestic pair sitting upon a hawthorn bough watching my proceedings: I retired, and

left them unmolested, while I reflected upon the care, the anxiety, and affection of these inhabitants of the groves. "Let
 " man," said I, "let the parents of the human
 " race learn duty, learn affection for their
 " offspring from these little warblers of the
 " groves. See the unfeigned fondness of
 " these poor birds for one another ! what
 " expressions of kindness !—May your love
 " be crowned with success ! may your pro-
 " geny remain unpilfered, and may you long
 " live an emblem of conjugal fidelity !"

When I returned, dinner was upon the table ; and though I found my mind was more tranquil, my appetite was gone ; a certain symptom of the mental œconomy being somewhat deranged. O Benfield ! do not laugh at me ; pity me, I beseech you, pity me, and send me some admonitory hints of consolation. I know you will say I deserve none, from the constant ridicule with which I derided your flame for my sister Antonet. But consider, I had not then entered upon my noviciate ; I was a
 stranger

stranger to the passion ; and your sighs and complaints made no other impression than now and then exciting a fit of immoderate laughter. But you know I was your steady friend ; that I interested myself in your favour, even when threatened with the penalty of my father's displeasure. But what am I saying, or to whom am I writing ? Indeed, Benfield, love will make fools of us all. This charming stranger, I acknowledge, has made one of me ; and it is long ago since my sister made one of you. Bear with my weakness. I never before could perceive the propriety of the application of Heavenly, Angelic, &c. to a mortal being ; yet now I confess the epithets may be given to my Olivia. Mine, did I say ? What obstacles are to be surmounted, before the accomplishment of such a wish ! The events of futurity are concealed from our knowledge, and many a happy effect is produced by a concatenation of circumstances, which seemed in their original for-

mation to threaten a different conclusion. May I not live and hope for such a favourable conjuncture !

I am ever Yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

FROM the contents of my last, you will readily conceive the anxiety of my mind. Wavering and indeterminate, I fixed upon a variety of methods to discover my passion to the lovely Olivia. But no sooner had I taken one resolution, than another started up, which seemed more specious and unexceptionable. One moment embracing what the next I discarded, I finally determined to consult with the worthy Mr. Brooke upon an affair of such importance, as was certainly to involve in its consequences my future happiness or misery. This point being settled,

settled, I walked to the Vicarage, where I found the good man busied in the study of the Peloponnesian war, in the original Greek of that acute Historian Thucydides. It was very lately, when the discussion of such a subject would to me have been a most delicious treat; but in my present mood of thinking, the investigation of any classical topic would have been irksome and tedious. He observed I was grave, and immediately enquired, in a tone of genuine friendship, if I was well. The interrogation somewhat alarmed me; and though conscious of my errand, from the violent agitation of my mind, I found myself altogether incapacitated to divulge a secret, the concealment of which was every moment adding to my torment, and depriving me of my wonted peace. My emotion was too visible. Mr. Brooke arose, and came towards me, saying, "My dear Sir, let me intreat you to make no scruple of acquainting me with the cause of your present anxiety, that my solicitude
" for

“ for you may at least alleviate, if not restore you to that peace of mind, to which at present you seem to be a stranger.”—
“ O Mr. Brooke !” exclaimed I, “ I thank you for your kindness! May it not be lost upon a wretch, who seems to be doomed by the inevitable decrees of fate to wretchedness and despair. I have endeavored to steer my course through life in the paths of virtue, but fear I have endeavored in vain.”—“ I hope not,” replied Mr. Brooke; “ the paths of virtue and religion are seldom sought for in vain. Though temporal happiness be not always the certain meed of those who adhere to the holy dictates of virtue and religion, yet they have a fruition, in that internal hope, that every suffering and affliction, however heavy, however desponding, will quickly have an end, when this weary pilgrimage is over, when this momentary scene of care and sorrow will pass away as the shadow on the surface, or the fleeting vision of an airy dream.
“ Dare

“ Dare you make me your confidant, Mr.

“ Wilton? Trust to my honour, and you may

“ rest assured, you will never receive any

“ disservice from the confidence reposed in

“ me.” I replied, “ Indeed, Mr. Brooke, I

“ came with a full determination to unbo-

“ myself to you, and though I have no cause

“ for my diffidence, I find myself begin to

“ hesitate, when I am about to discover

“ who I am, and the motive that prompts

“ me to ask your assistance.” Without giving

him time to reply, I added, “ I am the son

“ and heir of the Earl of Wilton; who, like

“ a prodigal and unthinking son, have by an

“ act of disobedience forfeited my father’s

“ love and esteem, overwhelmed an amiable

“ family in the utmost distress, and am my-

“ self here an alien, and an outcast from so-

“ ciety.” I then ingenuously told him every

circumstance relative to my own case, with-

out the omission of any one particular which

might bias him in my favour, concluding

with exacting a promise from him, not to

divulge what I had entrusted him with,

until

until privileged by my authority so to do.

Having fixed his eyes earnestly upon my face during the time I was speaking, as wishing to unravel my thoughts by the perusal of such an index, he said, "I hope, "Mr. Wilton, a favourable conjuncture "will produce a reconciliation. You are "not, as you would seem to suppose, lost to "all duty and obedience. Your father may "not remain implacable; your mother will "watch every opportunity to mitigate a "parent's rigour, with all the tender solici- "tude so conspicuous in the virtuous "part of the sex. You may have judged "erroneously of the merits of the lady. "Sir George, by your description, is "a worthy, intelligent, and deserving "man, and probably a little time may "convince you that the virtues of the "daughter are meritorious and laudable."

A deep involuntary sigh escaped me.—He observed it, and, casting a smile of the sweetest benignity upon me, said, "If I am "not mistaken, you are labouring with a "secret which you have not revealed. I

"wish

THE HAPPY RETREAT.

“ wish not to urge you to a disco-
“ you may rely upon me, and com-
“ services.”—I replied, “ I have
“ and upon that secret alone depe-
“ future happiness. I love Olivia. You
“ ceive there are impediments, which
“ almost invincible, yet they must be
“ mounted. Will you, Mr. Brooke, em-
“ your kind offices with Sir Robert, and
“ acquaint him with my ardent passion for
“ his charming daughter”—“ Hold, Sir!”
said Mr. Brooke, “ I find you are under an
“ egregious mistake in this instance. Oli-
“ via is not the daughter of Sir Robert
“ Bertram.”—“ Is not the daughter!” ex-
“ claimed I; “ fatal mistake! who is she
“ then?”—“ She is,” said Mr. Brooke, “ a
“ distant relation, who has lived with him
“ these several years, and whom Sir Robert
“ has adopted and educated as his own
“ child.”

Astonished at this intelligence, I remain-
ed silent for some minutes, when, taking my
hat, I informed Mr. Brooke, I would wait
upon

in the evening, and immediately
 have. I walked, as usual, into the
 is solitary—I wished to be alone.
 I was sequestered from every
 have the intrusion of the family to
 it belonged, and which, so far from
 eligible in the present moment,
 rather have been disagreeable.
 on the intelligence I had re-
 ived, I walked forward, with my eyes
 fixed upon the verdant turf. The rural
 songsters sung their lays in vain—my fa-
 vourite blackbird, at a few yards distance,
 whistled to his listening mate—I heard—
 but heeded him not—the flowers beneath
 my feet expanded their various tinges un-
 noticed. I attempted to divert my thoughts
 from their present melancholy turn; and
 with this intention I sat down beneath the
 verdant shade of a remarkably large plane.
 Nothing interrupted the silence which
 reigned around me, except the wild war-
 blings of the little woodland songsters.
 Here I reclined, meditating upon my unto-
 ward

ward fate, banished from my family and friends—no hope of returning, without sacrifice now rendered more improbable than before—a stranger amongst strangers—tormented with a passion which I now despaired of, since the lovely object of it was no more the daughter, but the adopted child, of Sir Robert Bertram.—Now condemning, now excusing the inconsiderateness of my conduct, in not attempting to inform myself of a circumstance which so nearly concerned my happiness, I had carelessly imbibed a subtle poison, whose operation, if it did not felicitate, would undoubtedly corrode my future peace.

In the midst of this contemplation, I espied Sir Robert, his Lady, and Olivia, walking towards the place where I lay. I arose with a full intention to meet them.—I had not walked many yards, when I paused—a sudden chilly tremor shook my whole frame.—I attempted to recover my resolution—I walked a few paces forward—I felt my heart beat with violence;
I even

When thought I heard it.—By an internal impulse of agitation and fear, I turned round, and walked from them. Observing the impropriety of such behaviour, I wished to turn again; but shame and confusion were predominant, and I had no other alternative than to quicken my pace; which I instantly put in execution, and walked home by a different path, reprehending and blaming with the utmost severity that dastardly conduct, which was afraid to meet the object of all my thoughts and of all my wishes.

Yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON.
MR. WILTON.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR last has indeed excited my pity. Considering the peculiarity of your case, separated from all your friends, and at such a distance, without a possibility of recurring to any of them for advice in so interesting an exigence, demands my warmest commiseration. Experience has long since taught me, what you must now feel. Yet certainly you have this consolation—That your probationary state will not be of that duration which mine has been; a state, I confess, of anxiety, solicitude, and sorrow, without the most distant hope of its termination to my satisfaction. Every day engenders new impediments to my union with one of the most lovely and faithful of the sex. I
have

have tried every expedient which love, patience, and honour, could suggest, in order to satisfy the capricious obstinacy of a father, who is ultimately determined not only to obstruct, but even to frustrate, the happy completion of our most ardent wishes. My love is as fervent as ever, but my patience is nearly exhausted. An incident which lately happened has not only excited my chagrin, but almost prompted me to put in execution the only expedient which will finally make me happy in the uninterrupted possession of my dear Antonet. The expedient referred to, is what I have frequently apprized you of, and which has been postponed from time to time, merely from your advice. Reciprocal affection is a powerful stimulant to overstep the impeding bars of paternal authority. And why should two rational beings, happy in the mutual interchange of a pure affection, be rendered completely wretched, from a base compliance with a power, which neither nature nor religion declares

declares to be insuperable? An elopement may accomplish, what years of passive dalliance have only made more difficult. After such an explanation, I hope the execution will not be frustrated by any interposition which duty may suggest to you as indispensably necessary on such a crisis. The insinuation is unfriendly. Why should I doubt you? I have tried your fidelity, and have always found it unshaken and invariable.

You will perceive my style and method of argumentation somewhat altered in this letter. I have had sufficient cause, and with which I will now acquaint you.

A few days after I had been honoured with the company of your amiable mother and her two lovely daughters, I formed a resolution of paying a visit, after a long absence, to my dear Antonet, at Wilton-Park. Presuming on the good opinion of your mother, and from certain intelligence of Lord Wilton being in London, I did not hesitate, but set out with all the
ardent

ardent impatience of a real lover. I arrived a little before dinner, and was received with all the genuine marks of undissembled kindness. Lady Wilton was so condescending as to say, “ Mr. Benfield, I
“ am once more happy in assuring you, beneath my own roof, of my favour, in your
“ honourable, but I am afraid your fruitless
“ pursuits. Antonet has repeatedly informed me, that she is affianced to you by all
“ the ties of honour and affection. May the
“ purity of your intentions, and the fidelity
“ of your passion, be crowned with that success which constancy deserves!” I replied,
“ Happiness has long been a stranger to my
“ breast. Years have now elapsed, and time
“ has brought nothing to maturity. My
“ Lord opposes our union with an obstinacy which reason would reprehend.” Here your mother looking attentively upon me, I recollected that I had overstepped the bounds of civility, in reflecting upon the conduct of your father in such a place, and before such company. I apologized
for

for the unbecoming warmth of the expression, as the dictate of pure inconsideration. She said, "Whatever motive may prompt his Lordship to oppose your marriage, I know not; he has not thought proper to reveal it to me." [Here a heavy sigh escaped her]—"I am seldom entrusted with his confidential secrets; and when he acts, he acts from his own motives."—I replied, "It is a true, yet melancholy observation, that the happiness of young people is frequently interrupted, if not finally destroyed, by the authoritative interference of their parents, who wish to regulate their youthful inclinations by the maxims of prudential age. This temporising behaviour has been productive of many and irreparable evils. They are manifest, and acknowledged on all hands; still they are persisted in, to the detriment of happiness, the dissolution of the matrimonial band, the contamination of morality, and the misery of human life. I have for these

VOL. I. I "feve-

“ several years loved my Antonet—yes,
 “ I will call her mine—with an affection
 “ unshaken by insult, and a perseverance
 “ not intimidated by contempt. Our
 “ youth was alledged as the first impe-
 “ diment. Patience surmounted it. A
 “ variety of excuses succeeded, which
 “ served to procrastinate, to tantalize, and
 “ to defeat the consummation of a passion
 “ pure and invariable. The retrospect
 “ is grating; and for years of chaste, con-
 “ nubial pleasure, our mutual enjoyment
 “ has been sorrow, solicitude, and care.”

Here I arose, and walking towards the
 charming partner of my unhappiness, I
 snatched her hand, and, eagerly kissing it,
 said, “ Have I, my Antonet, in the
 “ warmth of my effusion, uttered a sylla-
 “ ble repugnant to your feelings, to the
 “ purity of your inmost thoughts, or
 “ the chastity of your unsullied mind?
 “ If I have, let me plead for an imme-
 “ diate forgiveness.” She was sitting—
 her eyes were fixed upon the carpet—the
 crim-

crimson tint arose upon her cheek—her hand was close enlocked in mine—she said in words scarcely articulate, “ Mr. Ben-
 “ field, you have long known my uncea-
 “ sing attachment—it requires no repeti-
 “ tion, much less confirmation. You have
 “ not offended me, therefore forgiveness
 “ is unnecessary.”

Dinner was announced. This checked the fervour of my reply, but did not abate my present pleasure.

Dinner being ended, your mother and sister withdrew. This happy opportunity I wished to improve, by saying, “ My
 “ dear Antoinet, how long shall we be de-
 “ barred from the completion of our
 “ happiness, by the compliance with a
 “ duty you are so loth to infringe! Years
 “ have passed away, and we have yet to
 “ hope. Cruel authority! But there is an
 “ alternative?”—“ What alternative?”
 she replied hastily. I said, “ That of com-
 “ pleting our happiness without the ap-
 “ probation of authority.” She exclaimed,
 I 2 “ Oh,

“ Oh, Benfield ! do not mention it. Con-
“ sider the present unhappy state of our
“ family, and I am confident you will
“ not be willing to accumulate distress.
“ Time may produce what all our precau-
“ tion could not foresee.”—“ Oh Anto-
“ net! Time,” said I, “ is a tedious master!
“ This was once our hope; he has deceived
“ us ; why should we a second time put
“ any confidence in him? Let us rather
“ seize him by the forelock, and improve
“ from his tardiness. We have long
“ submissively waited for paternal acquies-
“ cence, and cannot obtain it. Beside, by
“ acting in conformity with your inclina-
“ tions, what have you to brand yourself
“ with ?”--“ Much, very much do I fear,”
she replied, “ that, were I to comply
“ with your request, I should probably
“ incur the lasting displeasure of an incen-
“ sed father, as well as lose the protecting
“ care of a mother, whose tenderness watch-
“ ed over my infancy, and whose anxiety
“ is a shield to my riper years.”—“ Oh
“ Antonet!

“Antonet! in me, in me alone, expect to
 “find not only the affection of a husband,
 “but the constant care of a father for
 “your welfare, and the tender anxiety of a
 “mother, to lead you with safety through
 “all the thorny mazes of this chequered
 “life. Each day shall only add to my
 “attention. Each night in my arms
 “you shall sink to rest.”—[Here I enlocked
 the lovely creature in my embraces, and
 she hid her blushes in my bosom]—“Let
 “me conjure you, as you tender your own
 “happiness and mine, to comply with my
 “requisition.”—“Dear Benfield,” she re-
 plied, “you have been long and thoroughly
 “convinced of my unalterable affection.
 “Believe me, when I assert that no solici-
 “tation, or length of time, shall ever pre-
 “vail upon me to violate that sacred
 “promise which I have voluntarily given
 “you. At present, press me not to a
 “compliance which would aggravate a
 “distress already too heavy. I could—
 “yes, I here avow it—I could willingly
 I 3 “prefer

“ prefer a life of poverty with you, be-
 “ fore affluence with any other. These
 “ fingers should toil for our subsistence,
 “ these feet should wander by thy side,
 “ and when thou wert weary, I would sit
 “ down by thee, and lull thee to rest with
 “ a song of sorrow.”

This tender, this gentle asseveration
 wholly overcame me, and suffused my
 cheeks with a liquid torrent. My tears
 dropped upon her bosom—she looked up—
 they were sympathetic, and she joined in
 my softening sorrow. A silence solemn and
 pathetic ensued. In this tender and af-
 fecting scene the door opened—and Lord
 Wilton entered. What was my astonish-
 ment! His countenance was stern, sullen,
 and furious. He came forward.—I un-
 locked my embraces, and was upon the
 point of framing some awkward apology
 for my presence, when my dear Antonet
 almost dropped upon the floor. She had
 swooned, when her father entered—my
 own confusion prevented me from per-
 ceiving

ceiving it—I caught hold of her as she was falling, and supported her in my arms. Lord Wilton sat down, casting a look of ineffable contempt and disdain upon his breathless daughter. In this dilemma I was quite disconcerted, and knew not what to do. I could not stir one foot from my Antonet, and I wanted immediate assistance. In a paroxysm of trepidation and despair I said, “My Lord, will you be pleased to touch the bell? Assistance is requisite.” He made no reply, but continued to view us with a horrid frown, sufficiently indicative of his inward rage. In this distressful situation I remained with my eyes fixed upon her face, watching with anxiety the first signs of returning life.—She heaved a deep sigh—she opened her eyes, then shut them immediately, as if the very light were hateful to her.—Lady Wilton, accompanied by your sister Sophy, entered the room, and, seeing us in the situation already described, shrieked out, “Alas! my daughter!” The sound of her mother’s

voice aroused her deadened senses—she looked round, and, leaning on my Lady's arm, walked out of the room. The ladies were no sooner withdrawn, than Lord Wilton said, “ Mr. Benfield, you have long
 “ been acquainted with my final determi-
 “ nation on this business, and therefore to
 “ infest my house with such unwarrant-
 “ able liberties in my absence, is assum-
 “ ing a right which a gentleman ought
 “ to blush at. Had not I been sufficient-
 “ ly explicit to your former requests, this
 “ visit might have been dispensed with on
 “ the footing of civility, as you are very
 “ conscious many of my visitants are situ-
 “ ated at a greater distance.” I was going
 to reply, but he prevented me by saying,
 “ An apology is unnecessary—the insult
 “ was premeditated—my purpose is de-
 “ termined :—” and then walked out of
 the room, muttering some other sentences,
 which I could not hear distinctly.

Perceiving myself thus slighted and
 insulted, left alone by way of aggrava-
 tion,

tion, denied even the privilege of replying to a vile accusation, you may conclude I was not only chagrined, but violently irritated. Necessitated to decamp, I walked out, ordered my horses, and left Wilton Park in a humour which will not easily admit of a description.

A few days after this adventure, I received a letter, a copy of which I have inclosed for your perusal.

I am, &c.

I 5 L E T.

LETTER XVII.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO
MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

BEING confined to my chamber by the express injunctions of my father, I have ventured, in opposition to his peremptory commands, to give you a succinct account of what passed after your abrupt departure from Wilton-Park. This disobedience, I hope, is the more excusable, as the communication is perfectly innocent. My restraints you know are many, and sometimes scarcely tolerable. I have suffered them with resignation, being chiefly supported by the precepts and example of my amiable parent, who for many years, under patience and humility, hath borne with meekness the insulting tone of obstinacy, and the froward decisions of an ill-

ill-assumed superiority. The effect has not been answerable to her desert. She vainly hoped, that such gentle and endearing behaviour would in time soften and meliorate a disposition long known to be callous and obdurate to the finest touches of sensibility. She has hitherto failed; yet she still perseveres, deeming it a duty incumbent upon her to give her acquiescence to a measure which she silently disapproves, rather than irritate a temper which never would admit of the least opposition. This does not proceed from a mere passiveness and timidity, from want of resolution or understanding, but solely from the purest of all motives, the wish to preserve domestic peace and tranquillity. She seldom complains; and when she does, it is in a manner so gentle, and so lenient, that it is difficult to decide, whether she applauds or reprehends. You know this little sketch is just and meritorious.

About an hour after you were gone, my mother and sister were sitting with
 I 6 me,

me, when we received a summons to attend my father in the parlour. We instantly obeyed; and when we entered, immediately perceiving my father's brow to be overclouded, I took my chair with agitation, trembling for the bursting of the storm. My father then said, "Lady Wilton, had you been unacquainted with my will relative to the addresses of Mr. Benfield, this admission of his visits in my absence might have been excusable; but as you have not ignorance to plead, and yet give a sanction to what I have finally prohibited, it is acting in direct contradiction to my pleasure, and an encouragement to an illicit amour, which may one day bring disgrace and ignominy upon your family."—My mother replied, "My Lord, you accuse me as an accomplice, and of encouraging and conniving at the visits of a gentleman whose attachment to your daughter has been long and constant. This visit was as unexpected as it was
" unlooked

“ unlooked for; and when he was an-
“ nounced, I could not either with civili-
“ ty or propriety forbid his entrance. I
“ supposed he might have some wel-
“ come intelligence to communicate,
“ concerning my dear Henry.”—“ Hold,
“ Madam,” said my father, “ I com-
“ mand you not to mention the name of
“ that ungrateful boy in my presence. I
“ have cast him from me—I have for-
“ got him. May his enjoyments in life
“ be equal to his disobedience; and may
“ every undutiful child meet with that pe-
“ nalty which will one day be his inhe-
“ ritage! Antonet”—“ My Lord!”
“ —Was it by your diligence that Mr.
“ Benfield was apprised of my absence?”
—I replied, “ It was not.”—He said,
“ May I acquit you, Sophy, of the con-
“ veyance of this intelligence; or have
“ you been tampered with by your sister
“ to encourage a connection which you
“ know I disapproved?”—Sophy replied,
“ Indeed, my Lord, I have never yet
“ disobeyed

“ disobeyed your will, nor was I in this
 “ instance solicited by my sister to convey
 “ any improper information.”—“ What
 “ do you call improper information, So-
 “ phy? Your answer is equivocal. Did
 “ you convey any at all?”—“ None in-
 “ deed, my Lord.”—Then addressing
 himself to my mother, he said, “ Though
 “ his visit, you say, was unexpected, your
 “ approbation was manifest, otherwise you
 “ would not have left them alone, to con-
 “ cert measures for a future intercourse,
 “ the accomplishment of which may ter-
 “ minate not only to your dissatisfaction,
 “ but to your sorrow and confusion. Pray,
 “ what was your motive for such a mea-
 “ sure?”—“ I did not,” my mother replied,
 “ conceive there was any impropriety in
 “ leaving Antonet in the company of Mr.
 “ Benfield for a few minutes. The pru-
 “ dence of her conduct has always been
 “ irreprehensible, and she hath more than
 “ once given a specimen of her obedience
 “ to your commands, though against the
 “ decisions

“decisions of her own inclination.”—My father said, with some vehemence, “You
 “are always endeavouring to exculpate
 “what you cannot defend; and pray, what
 “extenuation have you for the late specimen of your son’s obedience? It was,
 “I suppose, in conformity to the decisions
 “of his own inclination?”—This contemptuous sneer was received by my mother with that silent disdain which it so amply deserved. Then addressing himself to me, he said, “Will you henceforth,
 “Antonet, on pain of my displeasure for
 “a refusal, forswear all future correspondence with Mr. Benfield?”—I was already somewhat irritated by the bitter sarcasm cast upon my amiable parent, and answered with some petulance, “Your inhibition is too comprehensive, my Lord.
 “I have often, previous to this moment,
 “asked with all filial humility, why I was
 “prohibited with so much rigour from
 “the enjoyment of a connexion which I
 “deemed lucrative and honourable.”—
 “What,”

“What,” rejoined my father, starting from his seat, with his countenance distorted by fury, “do you begin to expostulate, and ask a reason for what I do? Is not my will alone a sufficient law for my children? And shall I tamely suffer the remonstrances of petulance, the interrogatories of disobedience, and the frowardness of arrogance? No, Miss Minx; no. And remember this, you saucy baggage”—advancing toward me, with his fist clenched in the attitude of striking, as he spoke these words—“remember this, if ever you a second time question my authority, I will turn you adrift, in search of your graceless brother, to wander through the intricate labyrinths of life, obnoxious to all the miseries of poverty, and loaded with the imprecation of a justly-incensed father.”—Poor Sophy, supposing, from his attitude and manner whilst he articulated his last words, that he was going to strike me, stepped hastily betwixt her father and me, exclaiming, “O, my
“ dear

“ dear Sir, forgive my sister ; she did
 “ not mean, I am sure, to offend you !”
 “ What,” exclaimed he, more violent than
 ever, “ a triple combination ! O Nature,
 “ Nature ! I tear thee from my heart !
 “ Out of my sight this instant, ye unduti-
 “ ful serpents, and remember you stir not
 “ from your separate apartments, until
 “ you have my positive orders so to do.”

We readily decamped, followed by our
 dear mother, pale, tottering, and seeming-
 ly half inanimate. Can such be the duty
 of a parent ? Certainly not. Children
 ought to be treated as beings endowed
 with rational faculties, not as mere passive
 machines. I shall certainly one day
 break my fetters ; they are become intole-
 rable. But I have a tie that will not rea-
 dily be broken—My dear mother often
 requires consolation—she entreats me not
 to desert her, in her present calamity ; and
 shall she entreat in vain ? Heaven forbid !
 My duty to a parent, whose love and
 tenderness I have ever experienced, shall
 be

be constantly employed in alleviating, or in the laudable attempt to alleviate, the pain of those melancholy reflections which are inseparable from a state of unhappiness. O, Benfield, condemn me not for such a determination. You know my heart. The revolution of a little time may accomplish all our wishes. But can I participate of happiness, or enjoy the least glimpse of peace, whilst my parent, a parent who never thwarted my inclinations without immediately convincing me she acted for my good, may really want my attention to administer consolation in the moment of distress, may sigh for that hand which hath supported her in the hour of bitterness, and shed the unalleviating tear of condolence, when grief spread her deepest gloom? Can happiness ever be my portion under such reflections as these? Remember, Benfield, you have a father.

Just as I had finished the last sentence, Sophy came giggling into my apartment, telling

telling me, she was sure she never would be in love, as long as she lived. I asked why. She said, she saw nothing but disappointment attendant upon it. My brother was punished, because he would not be in love; you are punished for being in love; therefore I will live and die an old maid to punish my father, and leave the inheritance and the old Mansion-house to some collateral branch of the family. I laughed at the resolution, and desired she would keep it.

LET,

L E T T E R XVIII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR.
BENFIELD.

SIR,

ACCORDING to my promise, I waited upon Mr. Brooke in the evening. I found him as usual in his study. He laid down his book on my entrance ; and which I without any ceremony took up. It was Quintus Curtius. " The events recorded in that Historian (said he) have always upon perusal struck me with admiration. " The ambition of a young Grecian Prince to undertake such an expedition as the destruction of the Persian Empire, and the conquest of all Asia, borders so much upon the *incredible*, that had we not had authentic attestations of the fact, we might possibly have concluded the whole

“ whole narration to be nothing more
“ than hyperbolical exaggerations and
“ improbable chimeras.”—I answered,
“ His victories were not so wonderful,
“ when we duly consider the troops by
“ which he was opposed. The volup-
“ tuousness and effeminacy of the Asiatics
“ were no match for the courage and dis-
“ cipline of the Greeks. But the conque-
“ ror, in my opinion, never appeared so
“ great, as when in the tent of Darius
“ administering consolation to his illust-
“ rious captives, the mother and wife of
“ the Persian Monarch. This was really
“ worthy of admiration in the youthful
“ Alexander ! But how long after this
“ have we any just cause to admire him ?
“ His mad behaviour and frantic ambi-
“ tion, in supposing himself to be immor-
“ tal, were not only derogatory to human
“ nature, but a sad proof of the fatal per-
“ version of our rational faculties. His
“ final exit was perfectly consonant to
“ his conduct through life,—one perpe-
“ tual

“ tual scene of madness; and so little re-
 “ spect was paid to his memory by the
 “ companions of his victories, that he was
 “ no sooner expired, than every relation and
 “ descendant of his family was inhuman-
 “ ly butchered by them, in the posthu-
 “ mous partition of his dominions.”—“ It
 “ is no more than a just reward,” re-
 “ plied Mr. Brooke, “ deservedly en-
 “ tailed upon the posterity of that hero,
 “ who can deliberately perpetrate the
 “ most horrid cruelties and unnatural
 “ massacres of the human race, upon the
 “ childish yet puerile pretence of adding
 “ one withering wreath to his mundane
 “ glory. How many peaceable and wor-
 “ thy princes have passed over this worldly
 “ stage, whose names are forgotten, and
 “ whose actions are unrecorded ! They
 “ lived in quiet, devising plans of public
 “ utility, reigning for the good of all,
 “ and dying with this acknowledgement
 “ from every judicious man,—that they
 “ lived the public benefactors of the hu-
 “ man

“ man race. But this still and sober pas-
 “ sage through life never makes that im-
 “ pression upon the minds of the Many,
 “ which is produced by the screaming din
 “ of battles, and the slaughter of bloody
 “ conquests. Vain and inconsiderate
 “ man ! thou art always more delighted
 “ with the blaze which would scorch thee
 “ when approached, than with the gentle
 “ heat which would warm and nourish
 “ thee ! How few, how very few ! ” ex-
 “ claimed he, “ of all the heroes and con-
 “ querors who have appeared upon the
 “ stage of life, deserve the honourable ap-
 “ pellation of the FRIENDS of MANKIND !
 “ What slaughtered millions in every age
 “ have demanded vengeance of the Sons
 “ of Ambition ! Grating reflection ! to
 “ think that man, the image of his Maker,
 “ should coolly submit to the horrid task
 “ of being the murderer of his fellow-
 “ creatures ! And for what reward ? Mere-
 “ ly to say, he lives in the world with one
 “ man less in it.”

Mr.

Mr. Brooke ceased. I made no reply, by which he perceived I wished to change the subject. After a short pause I said, "The discussion of any classical topic has
" ever given me inexpressible satisfaction;
" but when an affair of greater urgency,
" and consequently of more importance,
" presses for an immediate hearing, even
" the exploits of the Macedonian Hero
" must be content with the second place."

—Mr. Brooke smiled, and looked upon me with all the softness of a true paternal regard.—I continued: "Your communication this morning, Sir, relative to Olivia,
" has thrown me into the utmost embarrassment; and as a stranger, I am perfectly at a loss to whom I can apply,
" except to yourself, for a satisfactory account, upon a subject which so nearly
" and so tenderly concerns me."—He answered, "As your present embarrassment
" arose from some expressions which
" dropped from me this morning, I am
" willing to give you all the intelligence

" I can

“ I can, solely with a view to alleviate
 “ that concern which is visible in your
 “ present demeanour. When I first came
 “ to the vicarage of Bertram, Olivia was
 “ here, under the care of Sir Robert.
 “ She seemed to be then about eleven or
 “ twelve years of age. I have resided
 “ here these ten years. From the tender
 “ care and affectionate behaviour of Sir
 “ Robert and Lady Bertram to the child,
 “ I had not the least suspicion but she
 “ was their own daughter; and some
 “ years had elapsed before I was con-
 “ vinced of my error. As I had my in-
 “ formation by chance, and Sir Robert
 “ and his Lady always kept a profound
 “ silence on the subject, I thought it
 “ would be impertinent in me to urge
 “ any particular enquiry. I recollect
 “ some part of a conversation which Sir
 “ Robert commenced of his own accord,
 “ wherein he informed me, that Olivia
 “ was his niece, that her mother was dead,
 “ and that her father was in India. But

“ when I interrogated him more minute-
 “ ly, he evaded my questions, and, by an
 “ attempt at concealment, threw a doubt-
 “ ful mystery over the whole of his reci-
 “ tal, which left it more ambiguous than it
 “ was at first. The common opinion is
 “ (from whence it originated I know not),
 “ that Olivia is a natural daughter of Sir
 “ Robert’s, and that, having no legitimate
 “ offspring, he purposes to invest her, at
 “ his demise, with the sole possession of
 “ his whole inheritance. As for myself, I
 “ have no private opinion upon the subject;
 “ for what they desire to conceal, I have
 “ no wish to develope. Thus, Mr. Wil-
 “ ton, have I given you all the intelli-
 “ gence I am able, of an affair, concern-
 “ ing which every one who speaks of it
 “ draws his own conclusion. This only
 “ I am certain of, and my certainty I have
 “ drawn from experience, that she is a
 “ young lady amiable in the extreme for
 “ the sweetness of her manners, the gen-
 “ tleness of her condescension, and the
 “ improve-

“improvement of an enlightened under-
“standing.”

I listened with great attention while Mr. Brooke was speaking, and when he concluded, I found myself embarrassed what to reply. He observed my confusion, and kindly relieved me, by saying, “I perceive, Sir, your disappointment. You expected information, where I can only give opinion. I have not prevaricated, but have been as explicit on the subject as my knowledge would permit. To pry further, would only be an indulgence in a curiosity, idle, if not reprehensible.”—To this I replied, “I confess, Mr. Brooke, I am greatly disappointed. Finding myself much interested in the intelligence, I really expected more satisfactory information. I have not the least doubt of your candour and ingenuousness; you have no opinion of your own, and by Sir Robert’s artfully evading your pertinent interrogatories, I am fully convin-

“ced he wished to mislead you. Common
“Fame is frequently a common liar,
“and consequently no confidence can be
“placed in her report. However, Mr.
“Brooke, I beg of you to take no notice
“of my enquiries, until you know the re-
“sult of my future determination.”—He
assured me that I might confide in his silence;
and was proceeding, when a little boy,
somewhat taller than my pretty companion
whom I found gathering cowslips, came
into the room, and said, “O dear papa,
“come and see this poor woman; she is
“wet and trembling; she has one baby at
“her breast, and another at her back—they
“are both crying—O papa, how they are
“crying! and their mammy says, they are
“crying for hunger.—Mamma is out; dear
“papa, come and give the babies a bit of
“bread.”—“Where, child,” said Mr.
Brooke, “where is the woman?”—“Well,
“papa, my brother and I were playing,
“and she was walking along the road—
“the babies were crying. I asked her what
“they

“ they were crying for? She said they
“ were crying for a bit of bread, for they
“ had eat none to-day. Then indeed,
“ papa, I took the woman by the hand,
“ and brought her home, and now she is
“ sitting by the kitchen fire. She said,
“ papa, that God would bless me for
“ being so good to the poor.”

Mr. Brooke walked out, and I followed him to see this woman, who had struck the child's fancy so forcibly as an object of charity. We found her answer to the description. Mr. Brooke ordered her and her children some refreshment, and I contributed my mite to the relief of her distress. As we left the kitchen, I took the little christian by the hand, and would have led him into the parlour, being much delighted with his sensibility, as he did not seem to be above six years of age.—He said, “ Indeed, Sir, I cannot go just now ;
“ I must see the babies eat their breakfast,
“ and then I will come.” I was really delighted to see the officiousness of the kind

little creature, who would not suffer the servant to wait upon his guests, but served them with every thing himself very attentively. When we were withdrawn, Mr. Brooke said, " There is seldom a day in
" which he does not bring one or more poor
" objects to be served; and when his mamma
" chides him for it, his answer is, " Well
" mamma, if you won't serve them, I'll
" keep half of my dinner to give to them,
" for it must be a sad thing to be hungry."

This little incident gave me much satisfaction. The sensibility of the child to the distress of a poor fellow-creature, is a flagrant stigma on the conduct of many in their riper years. With what harshness, with what abuse, have I seen the complaints of cheerless poverty treated by the sons and daughters of affluence. Oh! would they but think, that the only distinction between the tattered half-starved suppliant, and themselves, is the mere external trapping with which they are decorated! The finery of their dress adds nothing to their
merit;

merit; it often enhances pride, the ebullition of a little mind. I have known more real worth beneath the dancing rags of a wandering wretch who begs a scanty pittance from door to door, than is sometimes to be met with beneath the gaudy glitter of a star and garter. Vain pageants, and too often ill-applied! Let the wearers of them learn from little Brooke, the relative duties which they owe to their poor brethren! Let them applaud the feelings of infancy, and then let them blush for their own.

The contents of your's and my sister's letter convince me you are not in a much more eligible predicament than myself. I think, Benfield, you will not readily pay another visit to Wilton-Park; and if I am not mistaken, the fullness of my father will make my sister take shelter in your arms. Whenever it happens, I shall feel myself happy in the affinity. But my mother! the sufferings of my mother grate me indeed! Could I but alleviate them,

and add one moment of happiness to her existence, I should deem myself the most happy of sons,

I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

AFTER coolly deliberating upon the subject of my passion, agitated in the greatest uncertainty, and considering my present case as somewhat critical, I finally determined to observe how some little attentions, rather more than mere civilities, would be received by Olivia, before I made any application to Sir Robert for his approbation of my suit to the lady. The only difficulty which I foresaw to my resolution was, obtaining the happiness of a fit opportunity to make those advances which I deemed expedient, and

and according to the reception of which I proposed to regulate my future proceedings.

This being duly settled with myself, I walked forth, ardently wishing for a favourable juncture, but which I know not when or how to expect. The morning was chill and damp, the wind blew cold from the North-east, and the air was foggy:—no wild notes from the hedges gave me a cheerful welcome—a lone and solitary chirp, now and then, from the chaffinch was the only music I heard—the park-wall was high, and I took the benefit of its shelter on the West side, to screen myself from the chillness of the blast. I walked and meditated, forming a variety of resolutions which were rejected in the very embryo. With my cane beneath my arm, my hands behind my back, my eyes fixed upon the ground, I was altogether inattentive to every object around me, when I heard myself addressed with, “Good morning, Sir, “and God bless you.”—I looked up, and

K 5 immediately

immediately espied the poor woman whom little Brooke had, the day before, brought to the vicarage as a proper object of charity. She was sitting beneath the covert of some brambles; the younger child was sucking at her breast, the other was upon her other knee, partly covered with the tatters of an old blue cloke:—she trembled, her teeth chattered in her head, and every now and then she tenderly pressed the poor little partners of her misery to her heaving bosom. I saw the tear steal gently down her cheek—she turned away her head in order to conceal it. I was moved; I wished to know the cause of her sitting there; and yet was afraid to ask her, lest the answer might revive some latent and afflicting sensations. She again addressed me with, “God Almighty bless you, Sir.” I said, “Pray, good woman, what motive prompts you to pray so earnestly for me?” She answered, “The purest motive, the feelings of a grateful heart. Your benevolence of yesterday

“terday enabled me to procure a bed
 “for myself and my dear little ones to
 “sleep on last night—the first we have
 “slept on for these three months past.”—
 Here a flood of tears choked her utter-
 ance; she sobbed, and wept bitterly;
 again she pressed her infants to her bosom,
 and tenderly kissed them both. I felt the
 tear rising, and walked a few paces from
 her. When I returned, I said, “You do
 “not seem to be familiar with the wretch-
 “edness to which you are at present re-
 “duced. If the recollection of better
 “days, and the recital of misfortunes, be
 “not too pungent and afflictive, let me
 “beg of you to indulge me with the nar-
 “ration of them.”—She replied, “I thank
 “you, Sir, for your great condescension.
 “The recital of misfortunes and the
 “communication of sorrow, frequently
 “alleviate the burden of woe. I have
 “sometimes attempted to tell my unhap-
 “py case to persons, of whom I have so-
 “licitd a piece of bread to satisfy the
 K 6 “hunger

“ hunger of myself and little ones, who
“ have scornfully turned from me with
“ the bitter taunt of telling me, “ Your
“ children will serve you to-day, they will
“ serve another to-morrow ;” affliction to
“ me more bitter than their uncharita-
“ bleness, and to which I never deigned
“ to reply. The very supposition that
“ my dear babes were not my own, but
“ borrowed with an intention of imposing
“ upon the benevolent, always over-
“ whelmed me with the deepest grief.

“ My father was a gentleman of small
“ fortune in the Western parts of this
“ county. I was an only child. My
“ education was suitable to my expecta-
“ tions ; and I was brought up with all
“ the tenderness and care, which the so-
“ licitude of an affectionate mother could
“ possibly confer upon me. When I was
“ eighteen years of age, I went for amuse-
“ ment to Gillsland Wells, a watering-
“ place of some resort in the North for
“ invalids and valetudinarians, but, like
“ all

“ all others, more so for the idle and the
 “ curious. Here I met with Mr. Moreton, a
 “ young gentleman of some figure, whose
 “ attentions and assiduities soon gained the
 “ esteem and love of a heart like mine,
 “ innocent and inexperienced. He ac-
 “ companied me in my return to my
 “ father’s house, and humbly asked per-
 “ mission to renew his visits. Being a
 “ stranger, my father hesitated, and told
 “ him, he hoped he would not object to
 “ an enquiry relative to his family, his
 “ connections, and views in life, before
 “ he could give his acquiescence to a
 “ proposal which in the result might do
 “ honour to his child.

“ Mr. Moreton readily assented. The
 “ enquiry was unfavourable to him. Tho’
 “ he had started upon the world with a per-
 “ sonal fortune of five thousand pounds,
 “ and a real estate of near one thousand a
 “ year, without any encumbrance upon it,
 “ yet his extravagance and dissipation had
 “ much curtailed it; and it was supposed,
 “ that

“ that his circumstances were much de-
“ ranged. The issue of this intelligence was,
“ his visits were prohibited, and I was for-
“ bid to hold any further correspondence
“ with him. But the impression already
“ made was not so easily effaced. Pro-
“ sperity and adversity were of no confi-
“ deration with me; and I vainly thought,
“ were I but blessed with the man of my
“ choice, happiness would be my constant
“ companion! Fatal error! By bribing
“ one of our servants, we carried on a cor-
“ respondence, totally unsuspected by my
“ parents, for near two months; the con-
“ sequence of which was, an elopement
“ to Scotland, where we were married.—
“ But the golden dream of happiness soon
“ vanished, and I had early proofs of in-
“ difference and inattention, which wrung
“ my heart with sorrow.

“ Within six months after our mar-
“ riage, my mother, naturally weak and
“ delicate, died, from the shock occasioned
“ by my disobedience and ingratitude.

“ My

“ My father, incensed beyond measure,
 “ sold his estate, and left the kingdom.
 “ Mr. Moreton, disappointed in his views
 “ in regard to fortune, treated me openly
 “ with negligence and contempt. His
 “ extravagance encreased, and his dissipa-
 “ tion knew no bounds. Soon after the
 “ birth of this dear little boy, I began to
 “ perceive, from the clamours of his cre-
 “ ditors, that his affairs were so involved
 “ as to be past redemption. I saw, when it
 “ was too late, the folly of my conduct.
 “ I often, in the mildest terms, remon-
 “ strated with him on the impropriety of
 “ his pursuits. His only answer was, he
 “ was not dissipating my fortune. This
 “ cruel observation always silenced me.
 “ When I was eight months gone with child
 “ of this sweet babe which is now sucking at
 “ my breast, he went out one morning.—
 “ I saw him mount his horse—he disappear-
 “ ed—but never more returned. The credi-
 “ tors now seized upon the little property
 “ that was left; and every thing was sold,
 “ except

“ except my apparel, which pressing neces-
“ sity has compelled me to dispose of, by
“ little and little, to support the craving
“ calls of nature, and supply the wants
“ of my poor helpless offspring. Re-
“ duced to the wretched plight in which
“ you now behold me, I took my chil-
“ dren in my arms, and left that neigh-
“ bourhood where my youth had known
“ better days. A consciousness of my for-
“ mer expectations, contrasted with the
“ shame and poverty of my present mise-
“ rable condition, incited me to fly from
“ those acquaintances whose feigned pity
“ added stings to my misery. Thus I wan-
“ der from house to house, from village to
“ village, whilst my strength permits me ;
“ and when I am weary and faint with
“ hunger, I sit down beneath the friendly
“ shelter of some hawthorn hedge, and
“ weep over my little ones, who lifting
“ up their eyes innocently ask the cause
“ of my sorrow.

“ Pro-

“ Providence, all kind and beneficent,
“ has hitherto supported me from sinking
“ beneath my misfortunes, and preserved
“ my health, that I may be able to preserve
“ the lives of my sweet innocents. The
“ many nights which I have slept upon a
“ cold truss of straw, the many which I
“ have passed upon the damp surface of
“ the earth, with the bleak winds beat-
“ ing upon my body, must ere this
“ have terminated my existence, had not
“ that God who superintends all his
“ works, supported me with the hope
“ that my misfortunes would be of no long
“ duration. Though I repine, I am yet
“ resigned.”

She ceased — she wept bitterly — then fixing her eyes upon her children with a look of pity mixed with the wildest sorrow, she clasped them eagerly to her panting bosom, and tenderly kissed them both, saying, “ Heaven provide for and bless
“ my sweet little innocents ! ” — I felt for her wretchedness, and wished to relieve
it.

it. I presented her with a guinea, desiring she would go to the same lodging where she had been last night, and likewise that she would meet me here at the same hour to-morrow morning. In the mean time, I promised that I would endeavour to concert some measures by which her miseries might be alleviated, and an end put to her present wandering condition. She took the guinea with a smile of joy—placed it in her hand—and now looked at it—then looked at me, with a glance of wonder mingled with surprise. After a silence of some seconds, she said, “ This charitable donation will confer
“ happiness and plenty, blessings to which
“ I have long been a stranger. Accept
“ the thanks of a grateful heart, and
“ as soon as my little ones can list your
“ name, I will teach them to bless that
“ hand which hath so liberally contributed to the relief of their misery.” Here the eldest child threw from it the tatters of the cloke which covered it, and looked

round

round about it. "There," said she, "George, look at that gentleman; he is our preserver, and more to thee than a father." The little innocent, as if conscious of what she said, smiled cheerfully upon me. He was dressed in a frock that had once been white. His countenance was pleasing, and he stretched forth his little arms to come to me, when his mother said, "No, my dear, the gentleman cannot take you."—He dropped his lip—the smile fled from his countenance, and he began to whimper. I felt an impulse of tenderness for the little stranger, and took him in my arms; and whilst I was playing with him, I observed Olivia, and a gentleman along with her, coming towards us. Not ashamed of my office, I moved on to meet them, with little George in my arms, who seemed much delighted with his new acquaintance. I had no sooner joined Olivia, than my new companion stretched out his arms to go to her; she took him, kissed him, and said,

said, "George, where is your mamma?" He instantly pointed with his finger to the place where she was sitting. We walked forward—I perceived by the observant glances of the gentleman, that he could dispense with my presence. When we approached Mrs. Moreton, she immediately informed Olivia what I had done, who asked me, if she had informed me of her misfortunes? I answered, that she had. She assured me of their reality, and taking some silver out of her pocket, she addressed the gentleman thus: "Now, " Mr. Longford, let me add your five " shillings to these, to give to this worthy " woman, to buy bread for her children." " What," answered he with much precipitation, " give her five shillings! Why, " my five shillings and your five shillings " make ten shillings; and she says this gentleman has given her a guinea, which " would make one pound eleven shillings " —a fine morning's work for a beggar, " truly! No, no, the poor-rate is too " heavy

“ heavy already. My estate pays above
 “ fifty pounds a year to support the poor.
 “ I have written several times to Sir Wil-
 “ liam Miles, our representative, per-
 “ suading him to have the poor-tax re-
 “ pealed, which if he do not, he shall
 “ never more have a vote from me, nor
 “ any of my tenants, and I have fifteen of
 “ them.”—“But, Mr. Longford,” returned
 Olivia, “ don’t you remember that pre-
 “ cept in the scripture which says, He that
 “ giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the
 “ Lord?”—“True, true,” replied he, “ I
 “ recollect it now; and you know I can re-
 “ fuse you nothing: but depend upon it,
 “ if Sir William does not repeal the poor-
 “ tax, I will keep my word with him. There
 “ is the money, I cannot refuse you—but
 “ I must say, it is a good morning’s work.”
 The poor woman received the present
 with a thousand thanks, took her children
 in her arms, and walked from us.

The abruptness of Mr. Longford’s ha-
 rangue, a strangeness in his manner, his
 correctness in calculation, and Olivia’s
 free-

freedom with him, all conspired to make me eye him attentively. My curiosity was raised, but his officiousness entirely deprived me of an opportunity of immediate enquiry. He talked incessantly, sometimes of the poor-tax, sometimes of marriage; then he would drop the subject, and snatch hold of her hand, to lead her safely past a stone or a mole-hill. I observed he received no check for his assiduities. Sometimes he discoursed very consistently; at others, I thought I perceived a wildness in his expressions, for which I was at a loss to account, except from some intellectual derangement.

We came to a gate; I stepped forward to open it: he told me that was his business, as the lady was this day under his particular charge. I looked at Olivia, as requiring an explanation:—she looked grave, but made no reply. I was much embarrassed, and could form no conclusive resolution how I should behave towards my very officious rival. With a view to arrest her attention,

attention, I said, "Pray, Ma'am, how long has this poor woman been an object of your benevolence?" She replied, "About six months, Mr. Wilton. Your generosity was well-timed."—I caught her eye fixed upon mine—I returned, with some ardour, and I believe a sigh escaped me, "Does this trifling incident merit your praise, Olivia?" She hesitated, as under some emotion, before she spoke; and then answered, "What can be more meritorious than to relieve the indigent, to alleviate the pressing load of penury, to cheer the drooping heart, and dispel the boding fears of craving hunger and depressive want."—Whilst she was speaking, her face was turned from Mr. Longford towards me. I caught the words as they fell from her lips; I was agitated, and eagerly caught her hand. I pressed it; she gently drew it from me. I observed her looks—her countenance at the instant was placid, serene, and composed

posed—nothing forbidding, nothing repulsive.

During this little interval Mr. Longford was frequently attempting to gain her attention, but she seemed to hear him not. At last he exclaimed, "Yonder come Sir Robert and Lady Bertram!" This exclamation disturbed my reverie, and I observed them at no great distance. This was the first time, Benfield, I ever wished for their absence. I found I had no relish for their company, no, nor for any other except that of Olivia. I was absorbed in these thoughts when they approached. Lady Bertram said, "The day is damp and chill; there is no pleasure in walking. Shall we have the favour of your company to dinner, Mr. Wilton?" I pleaded an excuse, and took my leave.

I am, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R XX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

MY reason for declining the invitation of Lady Bertram was, that I might have immediate leisure for the prosecution of my passion with the dearest object of my soul. The incident of to-day had added fuel to a flame, already too much predominant. I was vain enough to think that she did not view me with an eye of indifference. I recollected and weighed every trivial instance of our late interview; how she evaded the officiousness of Mr. Longford; her attention to me when I addressed myself to her; and how gently she drew her hand from me without a frown. When all these weighty reasons were combined, they sufficiently convinced me of my future

VOL. I.

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success.

success. Again I expostulated with myself, What is there in all this, beyond mere civility and common complaisance? This interrogation suddenly chilled the ardour of my expectation. I then began to deliberate upon the effects of such an attachment. My father's imprecation resounded in my ears, and corroded the little happiness I enjoyed. Mrs. Moreton was a lively evidence of the dreadful effects of disobedience to parents. Again Olivia, the charming Olivia, appeared in my mind—she stood before my eyes with all the exquisite grace and becoming loveliness peculiar to herself. In an instant, all deliberation, my father's displeasure, and Mrs. Moreton's disobedience, vanished from my thoughts, and Love, triumphant Love, reigned without a rival. I resolved to apprize her of my passion, and immediately wrote the following letter :

“ TO

“ TO MISS OLIVIA BERTRAM.

“ MADAM,

“ AN address of this nature from a
 “ person who is almost a perfect stranger,
 “ and has only resided in the neighbour-
 “ hood for a few weeks, may not a little
 “ surprize you. The short intimacy, the
 “ few observations I have been enabled to
 “ make, have convinced me of your per-
 “ fections—perfections which have sub-
 “ dued and captivated me. The sensibi-
 “ lity of your nature, the benevolence of
 “ your sympathising heart, will teach you
 “ not to treat with disdain a young man
 “ already but too well acquainted with
 “ the pangs of misery and the throes of
 “ wretchedness. That transcendant worth,
 “ that becoming loveliness, so conspicu-
 “ ous in all your conduct and demeanour,
 “ which I adore and admire, will never, I
 “ hope, be exercised to torment, by a cool

L 2

“ neglect

“ neglect or fastidious contempt, him who
 “ is unhappily destined, by a wayward
 “ fortune, to drink from the bitter cup
 “ of early misfortune.

“ There is a peculiarity in my present
 “ case which requires a verbal explanation. This, I shall embrace the first
 “ opportunity to develope ; and attempt to
 “ unfold, to your entire satisfaction, any
 “ mysterious veil or unfavourable impression which may have arisen from
 “ my appearance in the North.

“ Believe me, my dearest Olivia, when
 “ I assert I am actually unhappy. Unhappiness drove me from my home,
 “ from my parents, from my friends, from
 “ every thing I wished for in life ; and
 “ without you condescend, in your wonted complaisance, to soothe a flame as
 “ pure as ever agitated the breast of a
 “ mortal creature, my retreat will only
 “ add a shade to my distress, that was before too sombrous and melancholy.

“ Let

“ Let not precipitancy think it a de-
 “ ception, when I assure you that my fa-
 “ mily is noble, and I the unhappy heir
 “ of it. What some will deem as youthful
 “ folly, and others will censure as flagrant
 “ disobedience, is the principal cause why
 “ I have had the real happiness or the
 “ real woe of being honoured with your
 “ acquaintance. O let your decision, in
 “ this important conjuncture, be as fa-
 “ vourable, be as benignant, as the inhe-
 “ rent goodness of your heart can dictate?
 “ Commiserate, my Olivia, commiserate,
 “ if you cannot encourage, a passion which
 “ is inspired by a merit so generally ac-
 “ knowledged, and probably unequalled.
 “ Though I love with an ardour not easily
 “ described, I do not wish to draw you
 “ into any illicit practices, or solicit a cor-
 “ respondence without the previous con-
 “ sent of your honourable parents Sir
 “ Robert and Lady Bertram. In all the
 “ corroding illusions of doubt and sus-

L 3

“ pence,

" penſe, of diffidence and deſpair, I ſhall
 " await the iſſue from your benignity,
 " which ſtamps my fate irretrievably for
 " exſtatic happineſs or confirmed miſery-

" I am, with the ſincereſt love,

" Your humble ſervant,

" H. WILTON."

When I had finiſhed this epiſtle, and per-
 ruſed it over and over until I was weary,
 blotting, altering, and interlining, I
 perceived, inſtead of adding to the original
 ſketch, I only obſcured and made it more
 unintelligible. I thought it was not writ-
 ten with all the fire or with all the ardour
 which a young lady might expect from a
 captive to her charms; yet when I re-
 flected upon Olivia's apparent candour, the
 particular turn of her mind, diſcoverable
 from her common converſation and occa-
 ſional incidents, I concluded a rational diſ-
 covery of my paſſion would be more con-
 genial

genial to her disposition, than all the frivolous effusions, the trifling ebullitions of rapture and extacy.

Having finally come to this determination, an insuperable obstacle presented itself to my imagination. This was the safe and secret delivery of my letter to the hands of Olivia. To entrust it with any individual whom I was altogether unacquainted with, might not only lead to a discovery, but likewise to procrastination. A discovery so obtained might induce Sir Robert to think very unfavourably of me, for attempting to pervert Olivia from her duty. Procrastination, in my present case, could only add to my anxiety, and which I wished, if possible, to avoid.—In this perplexity, I resolved to walk to Bertram-Castle this evening, and watch for a lucky opportunity when I might deliver it with safety and secrecy to herself; and if any miscarriage should intervene, it was

L 4

solely

solely to be imputed to my own management.

When I arrived at Bertram Castle, I was welcomed, as usual, by the cheerful congratulations of Sir Robert and Lady Bertram. Mr. Longford and Mr. Fennell were there. I addressed the latter gentleman, who returned my compliments very formally, and coolly, so as to attract the observation of the lively lady of the mansion, who, with a vivacity peculiar to herself, said, "I think, Mr. Fennell, you seem to have no great desire to cultivate an acquaintance with our neighbour Mr. Wilton. He is a stranger, Sir, and as such ought not to be received with the ceremonious respect of a jealous eye." The last words of this sentence were expressed with a peculiar archness of manner, which often conveys a sting, when nothing more than a little harmless humour was originally designed. Mr. Fennell coloured—Olivia looked rather distressed—whilst Mr. Longford

ford said, "I am jealous of no man, for I
" am certain of getting the poor-tax re-
" pealed, of marrying Olivia, and then,
" you know, Sir Robert, Mr. Fennell may
" eat all his hares himself; for when Olivia
" is my wife, I will not allow her to pick
" one single bone of them." Sir Robert
smiled, and Lady Bertram seemed to en-
joy the distress of Olivia, and the apparent
confusion of Fennell, who replied, with a
sarcastic tone, "To treat any gentleman
" with the ceremonious respect of a jea-
" lous eye, who is a perfect stranger,
" whose family and connections are totally
" unknown, and whose appearance among
" us is somewhat equivocal, would by the
" judicious be deemed prudence."—Here,
throwing one leg over the other, he look-
ed round with an air of consequence,
while I retorted, "A stranger demands
" civility, and if a gentleman politeness,
" from every individual capable of the
" accomplishment. Civility is an easy
L 5 "carriage,

“ carriage, but not so easily dispensed with
“ in the common intercourse of life. If the
“ beggar who requests a morsel of bread
“ to allay the cravings of his appetite, asks
“ it with civility, he ought to be gratified
“ or denied in the same style, otherwise
“ he enjoys a visible superiority over the
“ person to whom his civil requisition
“ was made. And though I am a stranger,
“ and my appearance in the North some-
“ what equivocal, I dare venture to assert
“ that my family and connexions, though
“ at present unknown, would not bring
“ dishonour, by any alliance, on any house
“ in the county. As an individual, I
“ have endeavoured to deport myself
“ with so much caution, as to avoid giv-
“ ing umbrage to any one; and by so do-
“ ing, I conceived my behaviour even ex-
“ acted a return of common civility. I have
“ in this instance, as often before, been
“ disappointed.” Here Sir Robert wished
to make some observation, but was inter-
rupted by a call to supper.

The

The conversation changed, and took a general turn. Sir Robert was cheerful; Lady Bertram, by her hilarity, wished to spread good-humour amongst her guests; Olivia was serious, solemn, and composed; but Mr. Fennell was downright sullen, and Mr. Longford chattered incessantly, while no person but myself seemed to pay him the least attention. I was anxious for an opportunity to execute my intended scheme; and was agitated between the exultation of hope and depression of fear. The table was drawn—I held my letter folded and crumpled in my left hand, so as to be imperceptible to any eye. Attentive to every motion of Olivia, I hoped to deceive even the observation of eagle-eyed jealousy.—Olivia moved—her handkerchief dropped—I was alert, took it up with my left hand, and, dexterously conveying my billet-doux into it, politely presented it to her: she curtsied, thanked me, and took it.—My present trepida-

tion made me very uneasy. I alone was conscious of an action which strict rectitude might condemn. An unlucky accident might produce a discovery, when shame and confusion would be the inevitable consequence. The ladies withdrew—I was somewhat easier;—and impatience being fearful, I took my leave.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

THIS morning, with my mind perturbed, and fear predominating for an unlucky accident, I went to wait upon Mr. Brooke; one moment being determined to acquaint him with my proceeding of yesterday; the next retracting the determination, and resolving to keep the secret to myself, and patiently await the issue. From a consciousness of the impropriety of the transaction, I often wished myself in the same situation I had been in yesterday morning at the same time. I dreaded the event.—I reviewed the whole occurrence—I condemned myself for precipitation—and I wished to be able to undo an action which I had performed last night in an instant of time, with all the precaution and wariness which love and prudence could dictate.

Such

Such is the inconsistency, such the instability of man in his chequered progress thro' the mazy labyrinths of life! Ever in ardent pursuit for the attainment of what he deems Happiness, which seems to skim before his sight as a visionary phantom, ever enticing yet ever eluding the most eager pursuer, he acknowledges the deception; yet every year, nay every day, is a standing memorial of a vigorous renewal of this fantastic chimera. Even the accomplishment of his wishes yields no real satisfaction to his active mind. He resolves, he plans, he perseveres in the execution of a premeditated scheme:—he perceives the illusion; regrets his folly for an hour; yet, resolves to pursue the same round with as much avidity and ardour as if he had never sipped from the bitter cup of instructive experience. Thus time imperceptibly flits away—thus life posts forward on its little journey; whilst man, the giddy child of inconsideration, seldom

seldom begins to think, until the race is over, and he drops into the cold and dark aperture of the yawning grave.

Such was the train of my thoughts, and the perturbation of my troubled mind, when I arrived at the Vicarage. I found the worthy pastor assiduously employed in the instruction of his eldest son, a boy about six years of age. The little pupil attracted my attention and excited my delight by the quickness of his apprehension and the vivacity of his remarks. He was of a brown complexion, his features small, his eyes black, lively, and piercing. He held a Telemachus in his hand, in which he had been reading. His father was assisting him to recapitulate the principal events contained in the book which he had perused, and pointing out to him, with clearness and precision, the danger and destruction which the youthful hero must have experienced, had he listened to the seductive enchantments of the goddess Calypso ; when little
Brooke

Brooke said; "Indeed, papa, I think it
 " was unkind in Telemachus to leave her
 " so soon. Calypso saved him and Men-
 " tor from shipwreck, when they must
 " have perished; and it was very ungrate-
 " ful to leave the island, where they had
 " every thing they wanted." Here Mr.
 Brooke entered upon an elucidation of the
 subject, convincing him, that had Telema-
 chus continued with Calypso, he would un-
 avoidably have been drawn into all manner
 of vice and effeminacy—would have forgot-
 ten his intention in leaving Ithaca, the search
 of his father Ulysses as well as his exposure
 of his mother Penelope to the daily insults
 of a lawless rabble,—and would himself
 have been insensibly lost to all emotions of
 virtue and glory. He entered not into
 an exposition of the allegorical meaning,
 as he told me he deemed it above the
 child's comprehension; and concluded by
 saying, "I hope, Charles, you will be
 " as dutiful to your parents as Telema-
 " chus was to his." Charles answered,

as he shut his book, "Indeed, papa, should you be lost, like Ulysses, I would travel over the whole world in search of you, and never return home until I had found you." Mr. Brooke, with a true paternal fondness, kissed his child, recommended him to the protection of Providence, and told him his lesson was finished. Charles laid his book down and walked out. I took it up, and perceived the following verses written upon the blank leaves at the end of the volume. After I had perused, I begged Mr. Brooke's permission to transcribe them; and being pleased with the moral, melancholy strain which pervades them, I send them to you, from a conviction, that you will receive the same pleasure as I have, from the perusal.

ON A FAVOURITE CHILD, SIX MONTHS OLD.

O HAPPY BABE ! long happy be
 In this thy state of infancy,
 When joy and hope, and hope and joy,
 By turns, thy parents breasts employ.
 This soothes and cheers for labours done,
 That end not with the setting sun,
 But, thro' the darkness of the night,
 Tho' sleep be fled, yet gives delight :
 That smooths the sting of haggard strife,
 Amidst the busy scenes of life,
 When carking thoughts, and bleeding throes,
 Spring freely in this vale of woes.

O may'st thou never feel the care
 Attendant on a parent's prayer ;
 The father's joy, the mother's hope,
 When fondness gives to fancy scope ;
 The ardent wish, that sees the child,
 On the high top of favour pil'd ;
 The starting fear, the gloomy frown,
 Which see him tumbled headlong down,
 Amidst the grins of sneering hate,
 That ever warp this mortal state.

O lovely babe, wilt thou, when time
 Has led thy years up to their prime,

Repay

Repay that care, those daily tasks,
Thy helpless infancy now asks ;
Nor e'er forget those sleepless nights,
Those weary days, and soft delights,
When clinging round and closely press'd
To thy fond mother's panting breast ?

Wilt thou, when hoary Age has spread
His silver frost upon my head,
Guard and protect thy reverend fire,
And give that care my wants require,
And shield me with that filial awe
Congenial to great Nature's law ?
When on the bed of death I lie,
Wilt thou then close my fainting eye,
And, the last duty I shall crave,
See me laid in the clay-cold grave ?

What ardent pleasure intervenes,
When I behold these happy scenes
In Hope's gay mirror!—If they're true,
I'd bid this world a kind adieu.

When I was near the conclusion of my transcription, I heard a gentle rap at the door. Mr. Brooke attended—the door was shut behind him—I heard a whispering in the passage.—Mr. Brooke re-entered, and seating himself opposite to me,

me, just as I had finished, he smiled upon me, and said, "Mr. Wilton, I have received a letter, with a particular request to deliver it to no one but yourself;" at the same time presenting it to me. No sooner had he concluded, than a sudden tremor shook my whole frame—I felt my face glow—the power of articulation was denied me, and I had not the presence of mind to take the letter which he held in his hand. He perceived my agitation, and desired me to recollect, that it was a lady who was my correspondent. This gentle raillery sufficiently recalled my clouded reason, and I replied in a faltering tone, "I hope Mr. Brooke will excuse my weakness—it is a natural, and, I affirm, a virtuous one. It is the event I dread, not the reception of this letter,"—taking it out of his hand, and minutely examining it;—"may the contents be as favourable as I wish them, for thereon rests my future peace." Mr. Brooke then informed me,

me, that it was Olivia who rapped at the door, and delivered this letter to him, desiring him expressly to intrust it to no person but myself. Such a benign condescension and speedy answer, I said, was infinitely beyond my most sanguine expectation; and if it contained a final dismissal, I was ultimately—But heaven and Olivia be propitious! I broke the seal, and read the following answer to mine of yesterday, which as a confidential secret I intrust you with.

TO MR. WILTON.

SIR,

“AFTER I retired to my chamber last
 “night, I was very much surprised, on
 “pulling out my handkerchief, to see a
 “letter drop from it. Upon examining
 “the superscription, I perceived the writ-
 “ing was unknown to me. Finding it
 “sealed, and endeavouring in vain to re-
 “collect the receipt of a letter lately,
 “my

“ my surprise encreased. After the pe-
 “ rusal, I was still at a loss to conceive
 “ how you had managed the conveyance,
 “ until I remembered your complaisance
 “ in presenting me with my handkerchief,
 “ and immediately the whole mystery
 “ was unravelled.

“ I am not so vain as to suppose that
 “ I possess any of those external perfec-
 “ tions superior to the rest of my sex,
 “ to which you say you are become a
 “ captive, and which you so liberally
 “ ascribe to me. Flattery is a syren, in-
 “ sinuating and deceptive, which hath
 “ intoxicated many a female votary, and
 “ led her often unwittingly into the
 “ paths of fatal error and the destructive
 “ snares of vice. She captivates—she be-
 “ guiles:—her breath is pernicious, and
 “ frequently lulls the credulous listener
 “ into a fatal security. When a woman is
 “ addressed by the artful powers of such
 “ an assailant, it is a duty incumbent up-
 “ on her to weigh with deliberation, not
 “ only

“ only every sentence, but every word,
“ before she begins to make the applica-
“ tion, which may not only be erroneous
“ from her own partiality, but may be
“ instrumental in leading her astray from
“ the paths of rectitude and filial duty.
“ Though this is what we ought all to do
“ with the utmost caution, yet in gene-
“ ral, so agreeable and so subtle is the
“ poison, that the unwary falls a vic-
“ tim to delusive falsehood, and finds too
“ late, when Experience holds the mirror,
“ that she no longer enjoys her boasted
“ power of liberty and redemption.

“ Whatever peculiarity may be in your
“ case, I have not the least objection to
“ hear, but absolutely protest against any
“ further correspondence without the ac-
“ tual permission of Sir Robert and Lady
“ Bertram. This they expect from me
“ as my duty : I owe it to them ; and I
“ hope I shall never disappoint that ex-
“ pectation, which is founded on affec-
“ tion,

“tion, and supported by the unalienable
“bonds of sacred friendship.

“You say your family is noble, and that
“you are the unhappy heir of it. The nobi-
“lity of a family is certainly honourable,
“but I must assure you, that with me it is
“no inducement. The little knowledge
“I have of life, the little experience I
“have had in the pursuit of happiness,
“have convinced me, that Happiness is
“not always the concomitant of Opu-
“lence, nor Discontent the child of Po-
“verty. We may often behold nothing
“more than a splendid misery in the
“midst of affluence; and see Peace, with
“her handmaid Health, in the humble
“scenes of rigid penury. Titles may
“confer distinction, when obtained as the
“reward of merit; then they are truly
“noble, and add a real lustre to the
“wearer; but when they are the meed
“of servility and dependence, they only
“serve to make dishonour more flagrant
“and demerit more conspicuous.

“It

“ It is not my wish to add to your unhappiness. This is a cruelty I never can practise; but the mystery which casts a veil over a great part of your letter, must be unravelled before you can expect a more explicit declaration, or a further correspondence, from

“ Your’s, &c.

“ OLIVIA.”

When I opened this letter, the agitation of my mind, the tremor of every limb, and some other operative causes, cast such a shade before my eyes, that I actually could not distinguish one line from another. I wished, such was my anxiety to know my fate, to take in the whole contents at one single glance. When my vision became perfect, I read it over and over, and was rivetted to my seat. Mr. Brooke, from a thorough acquaintance with the œconomy of the human mind, was solicitous to relieve my perplexity,

plexity, by withdrawing my attention from a subject in which I was totally absorbed. He arose from his seat, came towards me, and said, "Mr. Wilton, the morning is inviting—Nature wears her richest livery—shall we partake of the fragrance of the fields, and enjoy those rural sweets which add a pleasing emotion to the mind, and the gaiety of health to the body?" I immediately recollected my assignation with Mrs. Moreton. We walked forth. The "wood notes wild" were in sympathy with my soul. As we advanced, my pretty black-bird saluted us with his wonted song. "Sing on," said I, "thou artless warbler, happy, thrice happy, in the possession of all thou desirest—time brings not care, and nature supplies thy wants." I had my eyes fixed upon the little object of my expostulation, when I was addressed by a female voice.—I looked round—it was Mrs. Moreton. I apologized for having disappointed her, and asked how long she had

had waited? She answered, her time had
 been agreeably employed, as Miss Olivia
 had been with her a great part of it. I
 then entered into a conversation with the
 good woman, in the conclusion of which
 I said, "I request you will continue in
 "your present situation for some little
 "time, until I can think of something
 "more eligible for your acceptance, and
 "depend upon me for the support of
 "yourself and little ones." She answer-
 ed, "Your goodness and benevolence" I
 "can only repay with thanks, and the
 "real effusion of a lasting gratitude.
 "When that fails in me, let your bene-
 "ficence be withdrawn, and may I be
 "regarded as a wretch unworthy of com-
 "miseration." George held out his little
 arms—I took him—he was better dressed
 than he was yesterday—he was conscious
 of it—and with all the simplicity of artless
 innocence held up the skirt of his frock
 for me to look at. I praised it, at which
 he seemed delighted. Mrs. Moreton then
 informed

informed me, that our liberal donations, as she pleased to term them, had enabled her to clothe her little innocents, to provide for their subsistence several weeks, and had spread a ray of consolation over her mind to which she had long been a stranger. I put another piece into George's hand; he gazed at it, and admired the brightness of its colour; and I added, that if it should be agreeable to Mr. Brooke, I would meet her from time to time at the Vicarage, when some plan might be concerted for her approbation, which might contribute to her ease, and supply her wants in the time to come. Mr. Brooke said, "I shall be happy to be an encourager of so laudable an undertaking, whose motive is benevolence, and whose object is humanity." She thanked us, whilst tears of gratitude streamed down her cheeks. She departed. We walked further in the sweet enjoyment of the western breeze. I am, &c.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



